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THE UNSEEN FRIEND

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"As seeing Him who is invisible."

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To

JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER,

MOST BELOVED AND MOST SPIRITUAL OF AMERICAN POETS,

WHOSE FRIENDSHIP HAS BEEN TO ME

ALMOST A LIFE-LONG BLESSING,

I OFFER THIS LITTLE ATTEMPT TO WRITE UPON

A GREAT THEME.

WQR 19FEB'36

No man can think, nor in himself perceive,
Sometimes at waking, in the street sometimes,
Or on the hillside, always unforewarned,
A grace of being, finer than himself,
That beckons and is gone — a larger life
Upon his own impinging, with swift glimpse
Of spacious circles luminous with mind,
To which the ethereal substance of his own
Seems but gross cloud to make that visible,
Touched to a sudden glory round the edge.

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

To be religious is to feel that God is the Ever Near. It is to go through life with this thought coming instinctively and unbidden, 'Thou, God, seest me.' A life of religion is a life of faith: and faith is that strange faculty by which man feels the presence of the invisible, exactly as some animals have the power of seeing in the dark. . . . It is this that makes a Christian. Move where he will, there is a thought and a Presence which he cannot put aside. He is 'haunted forever by the Eternal Mind.' God looks out upon him from the clear sky, and through the thick darkness, — is present in the raindrop that trickles down the branches, and in the tempest that crashes down the forest. A living Redeemer stands by him, goes with him, talks with him, as a man with his friend. The emphatic description of a life of spirituality is, 'Enoch walked with God.

FREDERICK W. ROBERTSON.

Glory about thee, without thee; and thou fulfillest thy doom,
Making Him broken gleams, and a stifled splendor and gloom.
Speak to Him thou, for He hears, and Spirit with Spirit can meet: —
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.

ALFRED TENNYSON.

INTRODUCTORY

THE weariness and sadness of life come from persistently closing our eyes to its greatness, — from forgetting who we are, and to whom we are allied. There is no life so poor as that which through too close a grasp of visible things, has lost all conscious hold upon unseen realities. Lifted into the atmosphere of Infinite Greatness, the soul itself grows great; enfolded within the Perfect Love, the life itself becomes love. When we are aware of an Eternal Life encircling us, of which we are a part, — of a Loving Presence within us to whom we belong, simply to be alive is almost an overpowering blessedness.

Two things we are all sure of, at times; two certainties we feel touching us like warm hands that reach down through the

cloud of mystery which often creeps close and cold about us, — that our life is fed from unseen sources, and that it is fed by an unknown Love. The first instinctive movement of our spiritual nature is an upward reach toward this invisible Being who loves us. And we reach up to Him — THE SPIRIT — because we also are spirits. The spiritual life is our only natural life, — our only source of union with other lives; it cannot be lived selfishly and alone.

For life is friendship. We are human, not in solitary independence, but through our relations to others. We were not made for ourselves only, but for God and for one another. When we are truest to ourselves, we are all together feeling our way towards Him, as if there were but one human heart beating in the whole race.

Friendship is the divinest of all our human relations. Whatever other social or domestic ties we may have, they are each and all incomplete without this. We can-

not be true to another in any relation, without being to that other a friend. Perhaps a human being is greater in this than in anything else, — in the power to be and to have a friend. The nobler the character, the larger and deeper its friendships will be ; the more natures it will enter into and illumine. For a true friend is indeed a radiance, sun-like and God-like. And no soul is without a friend, since every soul has God.

To us, who are human and spiritual beings, life can mean nothing less than friendship with God. Our lives, so far as they are real at all, are so through their nearness to Him. Close and warm as the nestling of a child in his father's bosom, strong and deep as the manly intimacy of the son who is let into his father's counsels — at once offspring and friend — is the relation between the soul and God. Every person who is spiritually alive is daily and hourly conversing with God, is thinking with Him, is working with Him

upon this unfolding humanity which is both His and ours. Every thought, every hope within him prays ; his life itself is prayer. And for this Divine companionship, this complete sympathy and oneness with God, every humblest child of His was created : to this he may and must aspire.

To be entirely and inseparably our Friend, God Himself has become human, has made Himself one with us. The Father is speaking to us through the lips of the Son in the loving utterance, " I have called you friends." The life and death of the Son are the revelation of the Father's love : His earthly toils and sacrifices for this dear human family of which He is one, interpret to us what God means — and what He means us to understand — by that glorious word, Friendship, — in the dialect of heaven interchangeable with Love. Through the heart of the Son, the heart of the Father is forever open to ours ; and from what

He is to us, we learn what He would have us be to one another. Not in any truest sense can one be a friend to his fellow-beings, unless his own nature is filled with the spirit of the Saviour and Friend of humanity — Christ.

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I

GLIMPSES OF HIM

God is so good — He wears a fold
Of heaven and earth across His face,
Like secrets kept for love, untold:

But still I feel that His embrace
Slides down by thrills through all things made,
Through sight and sound of every place.

MRS. BROWNING, *A Child's Thought of God.*

THE UNSEEN FRIEND

I.

Glimpses of Him.

THE mind of the child, as it awakens into this mortal existence, receives two distinct impressions — of persons and of things. Both are real to him, but he instinctively discriminates between them. Together, they constitute his world. In the great house of Nature he finds playthings, implements, decorations, clothing and furniture. All besides is companionship, is love, — implying protection, food, rest, opportunity for growth, and whatever of beauty or of mystery makes life open like a great, wonderful flower upon the soul of a new-born being. Persons and things form the perplexing

problem of his earthly experience, from infancy to old age. What they are to him, what he is to them, he goes out of the world without fully understanding.

The child discovers very early which of the two is more important to him. It is somebody — far more than something — that he wants. His toys soon weary him, unless the hand and thought of another help to make them amusing. He would never know what the things around him are good for, unless people taught him their uses. Perhaps he never does fully learn to distinguish what appears from what is, for persons and things are to the end strangely confused in the minds of us mortal-immortals. We think we have learned what things are, when we have measured them mathematically, — when we have defined them and catalogued them: but suddenly they surprise us by assuming a new aspect; they have unexpectedly taken on expression; they are alive with subtle meanings; they sug-

gest the presence of a personal intelligence.

Everything in nature has its own intrinsic charm, as the work of its Creator's hand; but the chief beauty of the whole lies in its suggested relations to humanity. Things announce and wait for persons. The house would not have been thus beautifully built and furnished, except for an expected tenant. And the wonderful building inevitably takes us back to the Builder: the holy and beautiful house to the Father who planned it for the abode of His children. Often the temporary occupant claims exclusive control of the house he lives in: he thinks it is his own, not God's. But every beam and rafter in it still echoes to His creative touch; out of every room in it, out of every nook and corner, His lingering Presence smiles, even as when, while the structure was yet incomplete, He looked from day to day upon His work, and said, "It is good."

Many, with whom the beginnings of

their own earthly story are still vivid, must recall the surprises which, when they were children, sometimes met them in every-day phases of nature. — "What is that strange light on the waves and the fields? Can it be nothing but sunshine? It seems like another kind of light. Where does it come from? How is it that things grow? What makes the world so beautiful — and the sky? Oh, there *is* something else, — there *is* somebody else! Who is it? and where is he?" — The sudden consciousness of *how lovely a thing it is to live*, often flashes across a child's soul like a revelation: the little being feels

> "Through all this fleshly dress
> Bright shoots of everlastingness."

And sometimes he is so certain of the presence of the mysterious "Somebody else," — so sure that the Unseen One is a better friend than any he knows, — it seems very strange to him that those he loves so well do not know more about Him, do not at least tell him where He

lives. They give him evasive answers when he asks, which make him feel almost as if he had no right to think his wondering thoughts of Him.

But both Nature and the little child are often nearer to God than the grown-up man. The crudest inorganic matter feels the throb and glow of the Life that has touched its dull, unconscious heart. In clods and clouds, as in the living, breathing splendor of the unfolding rose, there is a look, a question, a beckoning that seems to expect a human response. The poets have tried to suggest it: —

"I cannot tell what you say, green leaves,
I cannot tell what you say;
But I know that there is a spirit in you,
And a word in you this day.

"I cannot tell what you say, rosy rocks,
I cannot tell what you say;
But I know that there is a spirit in you,
And a word in you this day."

"Sometimes, as in the summer fields
I walk abroad, there comes to me

So strange a sense of mystery,
My heart stands still, my feet must stay, —
I am in such strange company.

"Clouds, sailing as to God, go by;
Earth, sun, and stars are rushing on;
And — faster than swift time, more strong
Than rushing of the worlds — I feel
A something *is*, of name unknown.

"Sometimes, as in the summer fields
I walk abroad, there comes to me
So wild a sense of mystery,
My senses reel, my reason fails —
I am in such strange company." —

— "A voice is in the wind I do not know: —
A meaning on the face of the high hills,
Whose utterance I cannot comprehend;
A something is behind them: — that is God."

Yes, — we may not own it — we may not even know it, — but what we do really care for in scenes and in objects that seem to us most marvelously lovely, is the mysterious suggestion of personality that they hold. They may be associated with some human presence that has made them

dear; they are sure to be haunted by a Presence behind all other presences; they flush and palpitate with the consciousness of One within them who makes them beautiful or awful; in whom they have their being; who is the Life and the Light and the glory of things, as He is of men.

From the first opening of our eyes, it is the light that attracts us. We clutch aimlessly with our baby fingers at the gossamer-motes in the sunbeam, and we die reaching out after an ineffable blending of earthly and heavenly beauty which we shall never fully comprehend. The glory of things is their spiritual luminousness, shining from within and from behind, — a veiled glimpse of "Him who is invisible." To see material objects only as material is a not-seeing; or at best, a half-blind beholding of an opaque landscape, a world in which little more than darkness is recognized — in which light is but an unmeaning dazzle, as it is with the bat and the owl. For the children of light, there is

no life except in the light. "The Life is the Light of men."

All forms are revelations of a Being. "There is a joy in contemplating the manifold Forms in which the All-Beautiful has concealed His essence — the living garment in which the Invisible has robed his mysterious loveliness. In every aspect of nature there is joy: whether it be the purity of virgin morning, or the sombre gray of a day of clouds, or the solemn pomp and majesty of night; whether it be the chaste lines of the crystal, or the waving outline of distant hills, tremulously visible through dim vapors; the minute petals of the fringed daisy, or the overhanging mysterious forests. It is a pure delight to see. But the eye can only reach the finite Beautiful. It does not scan 'the King in His beauty,' nor 'the land that is very far off.' It is the kingdom, not the King. — Even while you gaze, and feel how fair it is, joy mingles with melancholy, from the consciousness that it is all fading

— transient — not the Eternal Loveliness for which we pant." [1]

We are partly of the earth, and it is one of our earthly temptations to look upon the forms we see and touch as revealing nothing beyond themselves. We are like children playing around the vestibule-steps of our Father's abode. Light streams down the stairway, and through doors and windows, but we seldom look up towards the "house not made with hands," because we are so occupied with our own toy-structures of pebbles and sand, which we fondly regard as improvements upon the design of the Master-Builder. Or we light our little tapers and try to dig our way down to the foundations of things, guided by sparks which our own hands have kindled; turning our backs upon the illuminating hearth-glow which radiates from the One Eternal Centre of Knowledge and Wisdom and Love — the Home of the soul.

The very beauty with which God has

[1] F. W. Robertson.

robed and penetrated His creation sometimes leads us astray from Him who is at the heart of it all. We forget the Former in the things He has formed: —

" For, O my God, Thy creatures are so frail,
  Thy beautiful creation is so fair,
That, drawn before us like the temple-vail,
  It hides the Holy Place from thought and care,
Giving man's eyes instead its sweeping fold,
Rich as with cherub-wings, and apples wrought of gold. "

Out of his profound experience of this, Saint Augustine exclaims: "Too late I loved Thee, O Thou Beauty of Ancient days, yet ever new! Too late loved I Thee, — deformed I, plunging amid those fair forms which Thou hadst made! — Things held me afar from Thee, which, if they were not in Thee, were not at all." Extricated at last from his bewilderment, perhaps no man has ever felt more keenly than this Saint, how true a guide the beautiful may be to the Beautiful One.

"So," he says, "our souls may from their

weariness arise toward Thee, leaning on those things which Thou hast created, and passing on to Thyself, who madest them so wonderfully: and therein is refreshment and true strength."

Let us not depreciate earth. There is no atom in it but is alive and astir in the all-penetrating splendor of God. From the infinitesimal to the infinite, everything is striving to express the thought of His Presence with which it overflows. In the strong phrase of Mrs. Browning,

"Earth 's crammed with Heaven."

They have not gone far into the heart of Nature who have not had through her messages from the unseen, — communications from the spiritual world. She speaks to us when we are not listening, and we are soothed as by the voice of a friend whose accents are sweet, though we do not wholly catch the words. Sometimes she seems to say nothing; — the difficulty then is most likely to be in our ear, not in her voice. She gives matter-of-fact an-

swers to our matter-of-fact questions, and we turn from her, fancying she has nothing more to say. But let us listen with the spirit, and with the spirit she will respond. Every quivering leaf on the tree, every dew-tipped grass-blade, every bubble rippling along the brook, every tinted pebble at our feet whispers or trembles or glistens with its conscious little secret of oneness with the great invisible Soul. We are surprised at the eloquence that overflows from a world we had hitherto thought dumb. Even the homeliest and most insignificant weed has its gospel to unfold, if any man has ears to hear: —

"As Swedish Boehme never cared for plants
Until it happed, a-walking in the fields,
He noticed all at once that plants could speak, —
Nay, turned with loosened tongue to talk with him.
— That day the daisy had an eye indeed!
Colloquized with the cowslip on *such* themes! —
We find them yet extant in Jacob's prose."

Knowing that such miracles are opening every moment around us, always waiting for the eye of the reverent seer, — our

neglect of Nature, our indifference to her, seems stupid and almost brutish. We are not half educated, we are defrauding ourselves of our truest cultivation, if we are unwilling to listen to the wisdom these humble teachers have to unveil, who have known no other life than that which flows from the immediate Light of God. A drop of water, if it could write out its own history, would explain the universe to us. The tiniest blossom, if it could tell us about itself, would make all the learning of scientists and philosophers useless. Tennyson has condensed this thought into a perfect verse: —

> "Flower in the crannied wall,
> I pluck you out of the crannies; —
> Hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
> Little flower, — but if I could understand
> What you are, root and all, and all in all,
> I should know what God and man is."

The rock beneath our feet rings with the ancient secrets of chaos and with the unimaginable prophecies of evolution, —

with all the unknown processes and catastrophes and final consummations of creation. The dust of the roadside has affinities with these mortal bodies of ours, and holds a record of our lineage, back to our primal ancestor. Our own planet and all the other stars sparkle and glisten with the consciousness of a present Creator, the living God. It is the recognition of Him here which prepares us for the fuller revelation of Him hereafter. By a true appreciation of His blessings scattered about us, our hearts are softening and opening to receive the treasures laid up for us in heaven. It has been said that "The most heavenly state of mind is that which enjoys this world the most, and at the same time does not depend upon it for its pleasures." We are like mountain-travelers, who drink of the brook by the way and lift up our heads, refreshed and strengthened, to climb to higher fountains and purer streams.

The whole material creation aches with

a latent, suppressed harmony, such as is hidden among the fibres of those forest-trees of which men shape their most melodious instruments. There is a

"Still, sad music of humanity,"

moaning for expression through every created thing, longing for the human-Divine approach that will thrill it into sympathetic utterance of joy and praise. Nature is a Memnon, whose dumb lips wait to be touched by the finger of Dawn. Not only in those lovely forms which are a visible invitation from the heart of the One Altogether Lovely is this subtle harmony concealed, but its appealing pathos resounds from objects that touch each other and us only as discords. From things most crude and harsh and uncouth there arises continually a wordless murmur of prayer to be redeemed from their ugliness and their mutual repulsions, and restored to their true place as strong undertones in the grand symphony of Creation.

"In the darkest, meanest things —
There always, always, something sings."

As the gift is nothing without some living thought of the giver, pervading it with the flavor of human affection, so the charm of every natural object is that it was shaped for us by the hand of God Himself, and is sent to us with His love. He means that we should know something of Him through these things. The light that shines from them is reflected from His eyes, and the blessedness of His smile is upon them.

The light itself is His gift, and reveals His nature to us; for "God is Light." The secret of living is to find the Light within the light, through its infinite changes of tint and depth. He has made nothing wherein the light of His love is not hidden, for Life and Love and Light are one.

Does Nature seem to us dull and opaque? God's worlds are all stars and suns, as we shall see when at last He

opens our eyes. Then, — to vary a little the words of holy George Herbert, —

> "Then this new light which now I see,
> Will both the work and Workman show: —
> Then by a sunbeam I will climb to Thee!"

II

FROM PERSONS TO THE PERSON

The beautiful, the awful mystery of man! To him, to man, all lower lines have climbed, and having come to him, have found a field where evolution may go on forever.

PHILLIPS BROOKS.

Give human nature reverence for the sake
Of One who bore it, making it divine
With the ineffable tenderness of God.
Let common need, the brotherhood of prayer,
The heirship of an unknown destiny,
The unsolved mystery round about us, make
A man more precious than the gold of Ophir,—
Sacred, inviolate, unto whom all things
Should minister, as outward types and signs
Of the Eternal Beauty which fulfills
The one great purpose of creation — Love —
The sole necessity of earth and heaven!

JOHN G. WHITTIER.

II.

From Persons to The Person.

THINGS inevitably lead us on to persons. They would have no meaning but for human beings, who are their interpreters. The term "creature" is a generalization applied alike to things inanimate and to the lower organized forms of life. A creature may be an individual, but never a person. Personality is a human, a spiritual prerogative, — the highest possible illustration of life. It has been said that "life sleeps in rocks, dreams in animals, and wakes in man."

Creatures are God's hieroglyphics: persons are His Word. No argument ever reveals to a person the existence of another person. Life makes itself understood by life as a presence, — through

sight, hearing, and speech, or by some form of personal approach.

"Person" is said to be derived from "a mask;" and it is true that we do not always see the real man in his visible presentment, but only so much of his selfhood as he is able or willing to let us behold. We do not know him, unless we are acquainted with the spirit that plays hide-and-seek with us behind the appearance he wears. And what soul has ever penetrated all the secret recesses of another soul?

We talk glibly of our acquaintances; we dare even to boast of our intimacies. But whom do we thoroughly understand,—whom could we explain to ourselves perfectly, through and through? Mysterious dwellers in our clay tabernacles—as mysterious to ourselves as we are to our neighbors—we peer out of our doors and windows into the closed dwellings around us, and wonder, and wish we could enter, and are glad when a curtain is lifted, when a voice calls to us from within. But

apart, each in our own personality, we and they must forever remain. Even when the clay walls are broken down, we see nothing except that the strange inhabitant has retreated from us into some more secret shelter. It is this difficulty of getting at persons which makes them so intensely interesting. Every new character is a new problem. Not self-conceit, but humility, knows human nature best. Whoever claims to understand another person completely, is either entirely ignorant of himself, or else has a nature so small that he can measure it easily, and supposes it to be the standard of every other nature. Doubtless every human being contains in himself the elements of entire humanity, just as a drop of water contains the elements of the universe. But the drop cannot claim to be or to comprehend a universe, until it has developed into one.

Paradoxical as it seems, except as invisible beings, we do not see each other at all. Through our senses, — at least in the

ordinary understanding of them, — we become familiar with objects only. Sense is the contact of the material part of our nature with material things; and the sense that we call sight is only a finer method of touch — the most intimate approach of our mortal organization to the outer world of which it is a part. Through the mechanism of the eye, shapes and substances are made evident to us as they are to creatures of a lower order. But the shape outlined on the retina is not the being whose presence is recognized by the soul.

The presence is more than the person. There is something beyond — an atmosphere that reveals the nature within and diffuses it as an influence; — as the flower is more to us than its beautiful shape; as we know it best by its fragrance and by the exquisite tints it unfolds out of some separate inner heaven of its own; — as the star is more than a star to us, being also a stream of some celestial radiance behind and far beyond itself.

"What is strong but goodness, and what is energetic but the presence of a brave man? The doctrine in vegetable physiology of *the presence*, or the general influence of any substance over and above its chemical influence, as of an alkali or a living plant, is more predicable of man. You need not speak to me, I need not go where you are, that you should exert magnetism on me. Be you only whole and sufficient, and I shall feel you in every part of my life and fortune, and I can as easily dodge the gravitation of the globe as escape your influence." [1]

Persons are not much more than figures passing before us in pantomimic procession, until they are felt as presences. But if we mingle among mankind with any sympathy, we cannot help being conscious of their different spiritual atmospheres, the true effluence of themselves.

Hastening along the crowded street, we have caught a smile of recognition, have

[1] R. W. Emerson.

felt the touch of a hand, have heard a word spoken, and suddenly the world has grown larger and warmer and brighter, the narrow pavement has widened out and up into a luminous open road to grander worlds on worlds beyond, glimpsing before us the home-hospitalities of eternity. Or a cold, dark face has looked into ours, and we have walked shivering by, as through the penumbra of a soul-eclipse. We have passed stranger after stranger, and a wondrously different human quality has been suggested by every countenance which has met our momentary glance. We have had hints of unknown spiritual realms, of heights and depths beyond our ken, of chaos or of glowing new-born spheres;—of gray blankness where a blossoming universe should unfold, or of universe opening into universe—the natural into the spiritual, the seen into the unseen;—what Tennyson calls,

"The abysmal deeps of personality."

Cicero says, "Undoubtedly it is the

highest possible exercise of our powers for the soul itself to see the soul. . . . We are not bodies, nor am I, while I say these things to you, talking to your body. When therefore, the oracle says, 'Know thyself,' it says, 'Know thy soul.' It is what your soul does that you do. . . . As you know God, although you know neither His dwelling-place nor His countenance, so you ought to know your own soul, even if you do not know its habitation or its form."

Yet through the seen is our natural pathway to the Unseen. We were not meant to mask ourselves before our fellow-beings, but to be, through our human forms, true and clear utterances of the spirit within. Since God gave us these bodies, they must have been given us as guides to Him and revealers of Him. Spirit is the God-appointed ruler of sense; but sense is not evil, except when it dethrones and enslaves the spirit. Living together peacefully as master and servant, they build up together the Kingdom of God on earth in

the only way it ever can be built. The subtle shadings of soul into sense and of sense into soul make up the beauty and glory of the visible universe. In some grand way it will at last be seen that Nature is the outward expression of our entire humanity, as each human body is or is meant to be the expression of its separate soul. Hence the sacredness of all forms.

Max Müller opens a world of thought in the following forcible criticism of the extreme idealistic method: —

"Instead of seeing the light of God in every ray of light, hearing His voice in every note of music, and feeling His presence in the touch of every loving hand, our wise philosophers turn round and say that what they want is what cannot be seen and cannot be heard and cannot be touched; and that until they have that, their knowledge is not worth having. . . . Yes, I maintain that the eye is brought into actual contact with the Infinite, and that what we feel through the pressure on

all our senses is the pressure of the Infinite. Our senses — if I may say so — feel nothing but the Infinite; and out of that plenitude they apprehend the Infinite."

If form is shaped by the indwelling Spirit, — if every human body implies a soul, and every soul a body, and both together make the human being, — then our senses cannot be wholly animal; they must be pervaded with what is most real in us, — with the essence of our inmost life; they must be human and spiritual; or must at least, as our life deepens, be constantly deepening through the human into the spiritual. Perhaps this is what Saint Paul hints at in his wonderful words about the natural body and the spiritual body. The glory of the terrestrial is a true glory. The animal nature is perfect in its adaptations to animal life, but the glory of the celestial, though it may be unfolded through the terrestrial, is another and a loftier splendor. The human, by the awakening of its own inherent facul-

ties and functions, may gradually reveal in its own nature ever closer relations to the angelic and the God-like.

Our senses do grow more delicately discriminative by education in what we call "æsthetics": what may they not be capable of through a grand ethical and spiritual training? May not the perceptions of the spirit and of the sense at last become identical, so that our human instincts may be trusted as we trust conscience and the higher intuitions? Must not the spiritual body have its spiritual senses? and is not this world the place where both are to be developed? Religion means little if it is not the eternal bond of union between form and soul, between earth and heaven. There is no other comprehensible ideal of a perfected humanity. This complex being that we call Man, — this "red clay and a breath" — as a poet has designated him, — this humanity that we are and share, — this mystery of ourselves, — how shall we find a clue to it all except

by living truly in our earthly relations, and thus finding them ever deepened and strengthened into immortal alliances? One of our great preachers has said: "We talk about men's reaching through Nature up to Nature's God. It is nothing to the way in which they may reach through manhood up to manhood's God, and learn the divine love by the human."

A man may make a misanthrope of himself, but he is never one by nature. Something has gone wrong with him, he is not truly himself, if he does not love his fellow-men. Our instincts attract us to one another: our repulsions and antipathies are only reversed affections. Man is dear to man. In Carlyle's quaint phrasing, —

"A person is ever holy to us. — Is the pitifullest mortal person, think you, indifferent to us? Is it not rather our heartfelt wish to be made one with him, — to unite him to us by gratitude, by admiration, even by fear; — or, failing all these, to unite ourselves to him?"

Our happiness is largely in the hands of our fellow-beings, and we desire above all things to be acquainted with them, to live among them on friendly or on intimate terms. But the more earnestly we seek this, the more painfully we are often made aware that it is impossible. With the most eager desire to do so, no human being can wholly reveal himself to another. A friend is a beloved mystery; dearest always because he is not ourself, and has something in him which it is impossible for us to fathom. If it were not so, friendship would lose its chief zest.

"A divine person is the prophecy of the mind; a friend is the hope of the heart. Our beatitude waits for the fulfillment of these two in one," writes Emerson. And Frederick Robertson says, with a more penetrative fervor of eloquence: —

"The highest moment known on earth by the merely natural is that in which the mysterious union of heart with heart is felt. Call it friendship, love, what you

will, that mystic blending of two souls in one, when self is lost and found again in the being of another, — when, as it were, moving about in the darkness and loneliness of existence, we suddenly come in contact with something, and we find that spirit has touched spirit. This is the purest, serenest ecstasy of the merely human, more blessed than any sight that can be presented to the eye, or any sound that can be given to the ear; more sublime than the sublimest dream ever conceived by genius in its most gifted hour, when the freest sway was given to the shaping spirit of imagination. — This has entered into the heart of man. Yet human love is but the faint type of the surpassing blessedness which belongs to those who love God."

Life would be a drearily unsatisfying chase, if the attraction we feel towards our fellow-mortals did not always lead us beyond them. The many are drawing us onward to find The One. These wander-

ing, bewildered children, by their very misleading, convince us that we and they must somewhere have a Father and a home. This overbrooding consciousness of infinity that we share must be an inheritance. These half-revealed personalities suggest a glorious Person out of whose Being our being is evolved. What is man, with this mysterious nature of his, but a glimpse, a hint of the unseen and incomprehensible God? What is the highest and purest human friendship, but a prophecy of the Friend who is both human and Divine?

He who gives us our friends must with them give us Himself, or our hearts must still ache with unsatisfied desire. He knows that through these human longings we are groping after Him. He knows that when heart and flesh cry out for the living God, it is because both heart and flesh were made for God, and cannot find their true life without Him. He knows that every one of these human

affections is a sanctuary separated from His own Holy of Holies only by a thin veil, luminous and transparent with the Shekinah-glory of His Presence. He knows that the Friend beyond all friends whom we seek is no vague ideal, but a Being who is both loving and holy; infinitely beyond us in the divineness of His nature, yet coming close to us with a Heart and a Soul like our own; yes, and in a Form like our own, which Form consecrates these human bodies forever as temples wherein His Spirit abides. His Heart claims these hearts of ours for Himself with a yearning that our love for one another but faintly foreshadows.

So a master-artist of expression has made the minstrel David sing of the Lover of souls to the troubled heart of Saul, — the monarch at once so mighty and so weak: —

"Would I suffer for him that I love? So wilt Thou — so wilt Thou! —
As thy love is discovered almighty, almighty be proved

Thy power, that exists with and for it, of being
beloved!
—'T is the weakness in strength that I cry for! my
flesh, that I seek
In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall
be
A Face like my face that receives thee: a Man like to
me
Thou shalt love and be loved by forever! a Hand like
this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the
Christ stand!"

III

IT AND HE

Live not without a God! However low or high,
In every house should be a window to the sky.

W. W. STORY.

O Power more near my life than life itself —
If sometimes I must hear good men debate
Of other witness of Thyself than Thou, —
As if there needed any help of ours
To nurse Thy flickering life, that else must cease,
Blown out as 't were a candle, by men's breath, —
My soul shall not be taken in their snare,
To change her inward surety for their doubt
Muffled from sight in formal robes of proof: —
While she can only feel herself through Thee,
I fear not Thy withdrawal.

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

And thus looking within and around me, I ever renew
(With that stoop of the soul which in bending upraises it too,)
The submission of man's nothing-perfect to God's all-complete;
As by each new obeisance of spirit I climb to His feet.

ROBERT BROWNING.

III.

It and He.

OUR misled aspirations are our worst betrayers. It is through the instinctive outreach of his soul after a personal God that man becomes an idolater. Every thoughtful child thus unconsciously repeats in himself the experience of the childhood of the race. Few parents are aware of the difficulties that beset the minds of the little philosophers and theologians who sit upon their knees or play at their feet; and many a parent could not comprehend the disturbance, if he were aware of it. The child belongs to God: he knows it sometimes better than his own father does; and it is his Father that he wants — his father's Father and his own. Wonder and awe and reverence

awaken in him far earlier than those about him suppose. Everything he sees is a mystery, illumined by faint, frequent flashes of an invisible Light more mysterious still. He is born to worship; but rarely do those around him lead his soul to its true shrine; they have not always found their own way thither. So the solitary little being gropes and stumbles along his pilgrim-path, perplexed by

> "Obstinate questionings
> Of sense and outward things; —
> Blank misgivings of a creature
> Moving about in worlds not realized."

If he cannot find the Unseen, he will bow before the seen. It is still the riddle of persons and things that he cannot solve. The Father he seeks seems to hide Himself behind His gifts; and gradually he lets them fill His place.

Idolatry is the worship of It instead of Him, — of the creature rather than the Creator; and it takes as many forms as the created world can furnish, or the

thoughts of man can invent. It sinks almost to the lowest degree of meanness in the fetichism of the ignorant savage who bows down before a stone or a reptile, — and yet that meanness is paralleled, if not surpassed, by the civilized man who is a mere money-worshiper.

"*Covetousness, which is idolatry.*" — The words are explicit. Any accumulation of material objects and delight in them for their own sake and because they are exclusively ours, is putting them in the place of God.

The Israelites did a contemptible thing when they made a golden calf to worship while Moses was in the mount as their messenger, face to face with God; yet they did what — judging from our ordinary low standards — was the most natural thing for them to do. They thought they had lost their God, and so they made another of the things which they held most precious, — their earrings and jewels. They had feared Him, in their own un-

believing way; but it was evident that in their hearts they served and relied upon Mammon. Through sordid habits of thought they had lost the power of believing in an Invisible Being. Their own anointed prophet, in whose countenance they had seen the glory of the Lord reflected, became a doubt to them — nothing but "this man Moses" — as soon as he was out of their sight.

The curse of covetousness is that it destroys manhood by substituting money for character. One who is possessed by this base spirit sees at last nothing but the money-value in a man. "How much is he worth?" does not mean to him "How much of a man is he?" "What is the value of his life to other human lives?" but "How large is his bank-account?" The property seems to own the man, rather than the man the property. In Dante's "Inferno," misers are doomed to push backward and forward immense weights with their whole bodily force, —

half-hidden, half-crushed by their hateful load, shriveling behind the possessions which they had chosen on earth for their gods. The man himself cowers into a nonentity beneath his money-bags; nothing human being left but the power to push or drag them about. It is the natural result. We sink or rise to the level of that which we adore. Man loses himself in the object of his worship. Only in worshiping God he loses himself to find himself — loses his lower in his higher nature.

Every man is a worshiper, whether he chooses to be one or not. Whatever is Highest and Best to him is his God. He may grovel in the mud before some filthy idol, or he may place the respectabilities, the superficialities and conventionalities of society upon the loftiest pedestal of his thoughts, and make them his chosen deities. He may even pursue his idea of a No-God through the cavernous labyrinths of Nature, —

"Lost in a gloom of uninspired research,"

until he fancies that his quest is successful; but his No-God, his soul-vacated universe, is his idol, nevertheless. If he climbs a little higher, and thinks he has found an ultimate Force, a natural inherent Order in things, but will go no farther, he is still an idolater, coldly lingering at the shrine of IT. To study nature and find therein only dead matter or a self-working mechanism, is but to end a toilsome journey with the discovery of a new fetich.

The world is full of little gods that make little men of their worshipers, or that make them something less than men. Books are good; but he who gives his entire affections to his books becomes that merest rustling shadow of a man, — a pedant. Art is beautiful: but the art-worshiper is liable to lose his manhood in a weak, washed-out dilettantism. Goodness is noble: but one who has only self-conscious goodness has none at all; he is

a Pharisaic Narcissus, who adores nothing except the mirrored reflection of his own fancied excellences; a phantom bowing down before a phantom. The god of self-righteousness, shaped out of human littleness by human weakness, is the least of all the gods.

Idols are man's sole invention. There is nothing of God in them, and therefore they are "nothing in the world." They are of the dust; and the idolater, detaching himself from God, sinks back with them into the dust of which his body is made. The dust itself cries out against this desecration, — the dust, which God meant to be the mould of heavenly forms, and which feels within itself restless stirrings towards starry development.

The philosopher says, "Things are of the snake." And sometimes it seems as if man himself had the power of imparting a baleful semi-consciousness to matter, when he uses it in selfish, unspiritual ways. That which he might help to find its way

heavenward becomes hideous, demon-like, when he holds it down, as he holds his own nature down, to imprisonment in its own lower tendencies. There is something horrible in a wisdom which is only of the dust. It creeps and coils and poisons because it is not permitted to soar and sing and fill the world with joy.

However it may have come about, it is certain that things do apparently "seek to penetrate and overpower, each the nature of every other creature." — "These beautiful basilisks set their brute, glorious eyes on the eye of every child, and if they can, cause their nature to pass through his wondering eyes into him, and so all things are mixed. Therefore man must look at nature with a supernatural eye." [1]

If he yields himself up to the fascinations of the reptile-nature, he also will creep and coil with it, and at last will become its worshiper. The demon of the dust will take the place of the God of the heavens.

[1] R. W. Emerson.

Our more refined idolatries are those which grow out of our human affections. The love of a person for one superior to himself comes very close to worship, for reverence is an essential element of all true love. Nay, through love of the beings we have seen lies our path to the heart of Him whom we have not seen. But when we suffer a beloved human face to eclipse the Divine One, — when we forget the Creator in the creature, giving it instead of Him our supreme devotion, every nobler instinct of the being whom our idolatry would wrong cries out to us as with the voice of an angel: "See thou do it not! I am thy fellow-servant. Worship God!"

Robertson says truly that "to have low notions of God is idolatry." The attributes of the Divine Being Himself may be and often have been idolatrously worshiped. Sometimes men have in their presumption endeavored to take His incomprehensible nature to pieces as if it

were a mere mechanism, and then to set up the fragments as idols. It is so when any attribute is separated from His all-inclusive Being to be honored apart and by itself. Theologians have sometimes thus dealt with His power, His justice, and even His love, — giving to each their own weak, partial interpretation. They have reduced the idea of the Infinite One to their one-sided conception of Him, and thus have not only lost the inspiration of His life from their teachings, but have left a misshapen image of Him in many a bewildered soul who was seeking Him.

In worship, we approach the Best One to offer Him our best, and our best is ourselves, — the sacrifice of loving hearts and obedient, righteous lives. This is what the Divine Son brought to His Father out of His earthly experience: —

"Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body Thou hast prepared me. Then I said, 'Lo, I come!'"

The ground of worship is the recogni-

tion by a person — by every person — of The Supreme Person. "No other gods before Me!" is the first great prohibition of the Decalogue. It is the same as saying "Let not things come between yourselves and Me, the only Reality!"

If we do not worship God, it is because we do not see Him. The world, or the sin within us, has obscured our vision. As with the eye of the body, so with the eye of the soul: the least grain of a foreign substance introduced into it blurs the whole power of seeing. The pure in heart see God because their eyes are clear. They do not permit earth and sense to becloud their spiritual sight.

"We needs must love the Highest when we see it,"

and worship may be defined as love in its highest possible form.

Brutes cannot worship, because they have not personality. They have affection, intelligence, and many other traits of our human nature; but the highest

traits are missing. They are but partial, fragmentary hints of humanity, most pathetic, most appealing to our sympathies through their dumb, unconscious lack of something that we possess, which they must forever be without.

Man can love and worship the Perfect Being because he is a complete being himself, bearing, in every part of his nature, the image of God; — the Infinite Model filling and overflowing the finite mould, which by receiving enlarges towards infinity more and more, forever. Worship is entire consecration; the whole being open to the whole of God; man giving himself to God. God is always giving Himself to man, and consecration is but giving back to Him His own. Every part of our nature has its separate offering of love to make, and yet it is all one offering, for our soul is in every part of us, — is ourself. We bring back to God the ideal with which He sent us into the world — His life illustrated through ours, as it could

be through the life of no other person on earth. It is our "whole spirit and soul and body" that we present to Him as our living and perpetual sacrifice. Every breath is prayer; His inspiration within us is our aspiration towards Him. He who so worships God becomes like God — becomes one with God.

> "The noblest prayer is when one evermore
> Grows inly liker that he kneels before."

It is the character hourly growing purer, more loving, stronger in patience, in self-conquest and self-sacrifice, and that alone, which really honors God. Words of worship are on everybody's lips. The soul praises her Lord by a beautiful and faithful life.

And what is the soul but the whole being — the invisible personality — the character? In the words of one of our most spiritual thinkers: —

"Character — what is that? The absolute quality of a being distinguished from

his circumstances, — behind even that closest of circumstances which we call the body — the intrinsic substance of the soul, — what the man *is*, original, distinct, different from what any other man ever has been before; fed through the channels of his circumstances, of what happens to him, — but fed divinely from first principles, from fundamental and eternal truth; an utterance of the life of God, a true unit and harmony of personal existence, which can change every condition and be itself unchanged, — whose goodness and badness rest in the very fibre and substance of itself, — a true soul." [1]

In the light of such a definition, how terrible seems the thought of the possible loss of the soul, — the loss of human character, — the loss of conscious, growing personality, — the loss of all within himself which allies man to his God! No dream of a physical hell could be half so dreadful! "What is a man profited if he

[1] Phillips Brooks.

shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

God is revealed to us by His law and by His love as a perfect Being, a holy Character, the Father-Soul of our souls. The loss of the soul then is the loss of His image — of Himself — out of our lives. Without Him, we have no reality, no identity; we are nothing. We are persons only through sharing His sacred Personality.

Only a true man, or one who strives to be such, can be a true worshiper of God. He whose manhood is lost can bring Him no worthy offering; for worship is not a form of words, but the devotion of a life. The severest criticism any man can pass upon another is to say of him, "He has no soul." This implies that he is to us only the material apparition of a man — hardly to be spoken of as a spiritual being; that he lives as a visible organized mechanism, part of another organized me-

chanism that he calls "society," but not as a living man in sympathy with his living brethren. A poet has written thus powerfully of the ghastly vision that sometimes may be seen in the thronged streets of even a civilized metropolis: —

"They pass me by like shadows, crowds on crowds,
Dim ghosts of men that hover to and fro,
Hugging their bodies round them like thin shrouds
Wherein their souls were buried long ago.
They trampled on their youth, and faith, and love;
They cast their hopes of human kind away;
With Heaven's clear messages they madly strove,
And conquered, — and their spirits turned to clay."

Are the lines of the picture too strongly drawn? If a man is not the visible expression of a soul, can he be looked upon as a being bearing the image of God?

A well known writer somewhere speaks of "the great mistake of teaching children that they have souls. The consequence is that they think of their souls as something which is not themselves. For what a man *has* cannot be himself. Hence, when they are told that their souls go

to heaven, they think of their selves as lying in the grave. They ought to be taught that they have bodies, and that their bodies die, while they themselves live on. It is making altogether too much of the body, and is indicative of an evil tendency to materialism, that we talk as if we possessed souls instead of being souls." [1]

And herein is the secret of sincere worship, as Christ unfolded it. God is a Spirit, and they who would approach Him must do so as spirits, bringing with them their bodies also, filled with the spiritual life which He has poured through them, as perfume is breathed through flowers.

Let any child of humanity be possessed with the consciousness that he is a child of God, and therefore a spirit whose only home is in God, and he will not consent to "blind his soul with clay;" he will struggle through whatever hindering foulness of earthly surroundings his birth or

[1] George MacDonald.

circumstances or his own heart may have buried him under, up to his Father's feet.

We are conscious of imperfections — we might say of infinite imperfections — in ourselves, through all our faculties and affections. But out of the very depth of the abyss gleams upward the hope of the heights. For we are also conscious, through our whole imperfect nature, of possibilities that are drawing us up towards an Infinite Unseen Perfection — towards an infinitely Perfect One. All that is human in us believes in and strives after something better than ourselves, some Being more nobly human, in whom our ideals will be fulfilled. If we could once find a perfect human being, our love for him would be worship, for we should know him to be divine. He would be so identified with our conception of God, that to us he would be very God, one thought, one reality, with Him forever. And as we pursued this Divine Ideal, we should find in our own lives an infinite meaning

and purpose, — to become like Him, and so be drawing eternally nearer to Him. Such a Being our whole nature must instinctively bow down before, — for worship is the ineffable approach of a person to The Person, — "when inmost *me* is, as it were, brought into contact with Inmost Me." In that high hour of revelation and consecration, we do not ask ourselves, "Am I worshiping the Son or the Father?" We only know that we are in the presence of THE ONE.

Man must be thoroughly man before he can be truly conscious of God. All that is human in him must lie open to the entrance of the Divine; then he begins to know who he himself is, and what humanity is.

To us the Vision has come — the fulfillment of a prophecy which is in every human heart — of a Being like us, yet infinitely greater than we are, whose Divinity has unfolded itself through our humanity; who, living in the bosom of

God while toiling and suffering among men, has opened to man his only path of eternal progress, through love, and sacrifice, and aspiration.

Without the Son of Man, we are an impenetrable mystery to ourselves. But Christ has solved the human riddle, simply, clearly, — has shown us in Himself that man and God are one inseparable Life.

"When He came,
A real man to half-unreal men,
A man whose human thoughts were all divine,
The head and upturned face of human kind —
Then God shone forth from all the lowly earth,
And men began to read their Maker there.
— Now the Divine descends, pervading all:
Now, now we feel the holy mystery
That permeates all being: all is God's;
And my poor life is terribly sublime."

So close, so intimate is the union between man and his God, there is throughout the Hebrew Scriptures no symbol strong enough to express it except that of the closest tie of human affection — the marriage-bond. The idolater is one

who is disloyal to the Lord of his whole life, who has broken away from Him, and has given himself to low and evil loves, that will inevitably drag him down to spiritual ruin. The betrayers of souls are insidious in their wiles, and their victim does not always know how far astray he has gone. But when any relation, any affection, however beautiful and dear, is not interpenetrated with the love of God, it is certain that we are in danger of being led away by it from Him. These things are not He, but they are of Him, and were given to us for links between our own lives and His. So looked upon, they are perpetual helps to us, — stepping-stones in our ascent to Him, — altar-stones upon which we may kneel to worship Him, — altars which the descending fires of His love will beautify and sanctify. We can but love for His sake the very grass by the roadside, the very dust of the highway along which we have seen the track of His feet. And along the high-

ways of this earth He has walked, in the person of His Son; and still He walks with us, invisibly, a spiritual Presence, — the Bridegroom of the soul. Faithfulness to Him, the Ideal Humanity, is faithfulness to God.

We offer the Father only a half-worship when we separate Him in our thought from the Son. Christ is Immanuel, — God with us. He Himself said to the men He lived with on earth, loving and beloved, — "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." And again — "That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father."

God in Christ is God in our humanity: —

"The very God! think, Abib; dost thou think?
So, the All-Great were the All-Loving too: —
So, through the thunder comes a human voice,
Saying "O heart I made, a Heart beats here!
Face My hands fashioned, see in it Myself!
Thou hast no power, nor mayest conceive of Mine,
But love I gave thee, with Myself to love,
And thou must love Me who have died for thee."

IV

DIVINE-HUMAN

Do not be frightened at the word "anthropomorphism," for there may be the deepest reason in the nature of things, in the laws of the universe, why God should only be known in and through a Man.

F. D. MAURICE.

I think to every Christian there come times when all the strangeness disappears from the divine humanity which stands radiant at the centre of his faith. He finds it hard to believe in himself and in his brethren, perhaps; but that Christ should be, and should be Christ, appears the one reasonable, natural, certain thing in all the universe. In Him all broken lines unite; in Him all scattered sounds are gathered into harmony; and out of the consummate certainty of Him, the soul comes back to find the certainty of common things which the lower faith holds, which advancing faith loses, and then finds again in Christ.

PHILLIPS BROOKS.

IV.

Divine-Human.

FAITH is the soul of all good works. To be "without God in the world" is to be without any high personal standard of living. A godless person or community is universally understood to be drearily selfish, low, and bad. It is hardly too much to say that our modern society is only saved from dissolution by the unconscious contagion of Christian life and Christian ideas; — yet, "when the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith upon the earth?"

"Baxter, in his later years, gives as the result of a lifelong experience among the souls of men, his firm conviction that the true cause for the indifference and godlessness of the great mass of society lies

in this, that the careless and ignorant who compose it, do not — in a speculative sense — believe in God or in a future world. Of any man of whom it may be said that 'he careth not for God, neither is God in all his thoughts,' it may also in a certain sense be affirmed that he does not believe in Him."[1]

There are very few persons who would not feel themselves wronged to hear it said of them that they do not believe in God. The proof that many really do not, is that they do not believe in man, — in their own human possibilities, and in the perfectibility of the race through Him who is its Exemplar and Redeemer. These are the words of that most spiritual thinker, Frederick Maurice, on this subject : —

"The difficulty of all difficulties, whatever we may fancy, is to believe in *God*, in a *living* and *true* God, in a God who loves His creatures."

"There is a hardness of heart, an inhumanity which makes it impossible for men,

[1] Dora Greenwell.

for the most apparently religious men, to receive Jesus as the Son of Man; and therefore it is impossible for them really to receive Him as the Son of God, as revealing the mind and character of His Father in heaven."

"I cannot put up with a dream in place of God. He is a Spirit, but He is a reality; a true being, in the highest sense. As such I must behold Him, or not at all. To behold Him in that way in which they could alone understand Him, in which they could converse with Him, — namely, as a man, — was the longing desire of every patriarch, prophet, and priest from Adam downward."

Men must reach out after something human in God, before they can spiritually approach Him. Paul at Athens, trying to show the idolatrous Greeks their way to the unknown God, told them of "*that man*" who had risen from the dead to be the invisible Judge of mankind. But those Athenians did not want their lives

brought to judgment that they might become better men; they only wanted a new god that could be set up and talked about. So they met the Apostle's fervid appeal with mockery or with cold politeness. Again, in his charge to Timothy, he dwells lovingly upon the thought of the "mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus," — the One Being through whom God can be understood and loved. This Divine Man, invisible in the bosom of the Father, he lived with in a conscious, intimate friendship that was as real to him as his own life. Paul was consecrated to the sacred purpose for which Christ had come into the world, — to bring souls back to their lost life in God, — to restore to humanity its crown, — the glory of righteousness. That consecration and that friendship he desired every man to share; he knew that every man may share it, and that this alone is salvation, — to become spiritual men, — each "a new man in Christ Jesus."

It seems so simple! — the only natural life for a man to lead. But alas! men do not easily believe either in themselves or in God. They do not think that they *can* be spiritual men, — they are not sure that they even wish to be. Visible things are the only real things to them; the dear, unseen presence of Christ seems to them nothing but a dream.

And yet the pages of the Old Testament are eloquent through and through with the pathos of souls imploring the unseen God to give them some human token of His presence. That cry becomes the burden of prophecy. The men who believed in God at all felt sure that He must be closer to their humanity than they were aware; that He must be *in* it, in some unknown way, as one of themselves. Not their spirit only, but their heart and their flesh cried out for a nearer acquaintance with the living God.

Jacob, struggling in the darkness with a Power whose awful holiness could but

wound his weak manhood, even while it touched him to bless him, — Moses in the desert, talking as friend with friend to a Being before whose glory he hid his face, — both of them sure of God, yet longing to know him as man, asked to be told His Name. To Jacob it was refused; the blessing of a spiritual touch — of a hurt and a healing through a revealed Righteousness beyond his own — was the only answer he was then prepared to receive. To Moses, who was to lead a great people out of the Egypt of their sins into the Canaan of a true and just and righteous life, His Name was made known.

And what was that Name? Simple, distinct, clear as the sun, — yet because of its dazzling simplicity impossible to be fully received into the darkness of sin-bewildered minds: I AM. The Israelites had felt the guidance of an invisible Wisdom and Righteousness and Love. They were to learn that these were not mere abstract qualities, — but the deepest life-

utterances of a Being — THE BEING whose Name they sought. The laws He gave them were the unfolding of the Law of His own Life; and He and His Law were shown to be the only reality, the only Source and Stream of permanence in the universe, the only Life through which they themselves could eternally live, — the I AM.

The positive declaration of Jesus Christ regarding himself was "*I am.*" Not merely a man who in that generation had come into existence, but one whose being radiated earthward from far beyond the beginnings of mortal history, — "before Abraham was." As positively He also said of Himself, "I am the Truth and the Life." He is, *because* He is the Truth. Life cannot be — even in God — without the Truth, which in itself is eternity. Real, permanent life cannot be in man, except as it is built up on the same foundation of truth, and developed into the same noble completeness of character that was made

visible in Christ. To believe in Him is to be like Him. All other faith is a mere mist of words, dissolving into empty air. To live our human lives as He lived His — purely, lovingly, righteously — is to share His eternity. This is the only life of faith, and he who has found it has found the Way, for others as well as for himself. For a man to say "I am" with God — as a true man humbly may — is to declare his own immortality. To be alive in God is to be immortal. The child who in any degree bears his Father's likeness in his own character has a right to the reverent consciousness that he shares the eternal life of his Father; and he is a witness to his brethren of a Life and a Love which are their birthright also.

They who have gone out of our sight with His light shining in their faces, the holy radiance of whose lives has left a wake of glory streaming behind them across the abysses of death, — we cannot think of them as beings less real than ourselves.

Having drawn nearer to God, they have also come spiritually nearer to us ; it is an instinct of the soul to believe it. They *are*, and they are themselves ; only developed now into celestial loveliness. They would not be themselves without their spiritual relationship to us and to God ; and doubtless they hold us and help us with a love more tenderly compelling than we think or dream. Believing this of those who, noble and lovely as they were, yet shared our mortal imperfections, our errors and our sins, how can we help believing it of Him whose life on earth was one unfailing, ever-increasing overflow of the life of God, — the perfect One, the Saviour Christ, the Head and representative of the human race? He lives in humanity still ; He is every day its Redeemer. If we are saved at all, He is saving us every hour. For through the communication of His purity and holiness to our sin-diseased natures, as by healthy blood poured into our soul's veins, and by this only, are we

renewed and saved. Sin weakens our powers, — sinks us below ourselves. He lifts us back into His perfect strength and health, bringing us once more into our natural condition as His Father's children.

"The grand affirmation of Christianity is, — God is divinely human; and this is affirmed not in words alone, which might be piled up to the skies without giving us a revelation. It presents a Perfect Humanity in which the Divine attributes are incarnated in the image of the invisible God."[1]

"Neither is there salvation in any other." None but the Son *can* lead us home to the Father. Only in finding Christ can we find ourselves. He is the full explanation and completion of our human nature.

The word "Christianity" — indicating a classified system among other religious systems — seems often but a dilution of the thought, the reality, — *Christ*. He is

[1] E. H. Sears.

His own gospel. His Name and His Person tower infinitely above all the rites and formulas and doctrines with which His followers have so often unwittingly veiled His glory to simple-hearted men.

"The greatest truth of the gospel is Christ Himself — a human body become the organ of the Divine Nature, and revealing, under the conditions of an earthly life, the glory of God." [1]

"If you speak of Christ as not perfectly human, in His own sense of the word," says Max Müller, "you make a new idol of Him, and you utterly destroy the very soul of His religion. Other prophets have tried to reveal to us what God is. Christ has revealed to us what man is, and that is the greatest of all revelations." Yes, for it is the revelation to mankind of their divine relationship: the Son has come to show all men that they also are sons of God.

"This is the function of the Son of Man,

[1] Horace Bushnell.

to give men their Heavenly Father, the Father whom He knew, the God with whom He lived in communion, in the personal relations of spirit with spirit. We have no means of knowing God except by knowing His image in our own nature. The knowledge of God was lost to the world, because the image of God had been lost out of the soul. Christ, through obedience to the inward promptings, kept the mirror pure, without flaw or soil, and so manifested the Father in the Son. There is no other mirror to which we have access, in which He can spiritually be seen as He is. It is not that God began to be our Father in Christ, but that in Christ a Son was found, in all things loving, in all things trusting, in all things obedient. Then for the first time the world saw, in the living form of holy Love, the image in which we are made." [1]

"Only one mediator, and he is human. And why must he be a man? Simply be-

[1] J. H. Thom.

cause God is human and nothing else than humanity can transmit Him as He is. This grand truth of the HUMANITY OF GOD, rightly discriminated and apprehended, is one of the most precious and vital in all the treasury of the Gospel. It is opposed to two specious and besetting errors, — that God is an impassive force somewhere at the centre of things, whence this great mechanism of worlds grew out by spontaneous evolution, — and it is opposed to the more hideous notion that He is an arbitrary sovereign. . . . Saint John in apocalyptic vision looks away up to the throne of God, and what does he see there? Not an arbitrary sovereign clothed in pomp and terror, — not the lightnings out of the storm-clouds, — not the show of magnificence affected by earthly sovereigns, — but right in the midst of the throne, as it were getting sight of the Heart of God, — *a Lamb as it had been slain*, — the wounded love of the Creator Himself, as if there were a Calvary not in

Palestine alone, but away in the Heart of God, where we crucify Him by our disobedience every day." [1]

He spoke out of His Father's heart to the wise men and the humble shepherds of old, long before the angels sang over His birth in Bethlehem, and they heard His voice. They were His "other sheep;" they belonged to His flock as truly as those who entered the Christian fold when it was afterwards opened. In obeying the highest call of the Truth to their souls, they were following Him.

"In all ages of the world, under all the divine dispensations, among all classes and creeds, it is through Christ, and through Him alone, that any man, in any measure, has had the life of God. Christ is more than simply a personage who figured for a little time in human history some eighteen hundred years ago. He is the Lamb of God who was slain from the foundation of the world. He fills a larger space

[1] E. H. Sears.

in the inner history of souls than in the outer history of the world. He was insphered in our humanity before he was manifested in our flesh."[1]

The belief in the Son of Man who is also the Son of God gives to every human life its grandest inspiration, because it furnishes each with a perfect ideal — with the only ideal that can make life really seem or be worth living. It is practical; it is an earthly life spiritually lived, — as by Jesus Christ, so by every one who is in spiritual union with Him and the Father. Each is a branch of the immortal Vine, fed by the same living sap, though each bears its own separate, peculiar fruit. We could far more easily doubt the reality of our present mortal lives, than we can doubt that He immortally lives, and is within us, the very Presence and Power of the Father. Because He lives, we are alive, for He is the only Lord and Giver of life; and we are dear to Him as

[1] J. R. Shipman.

the ruddy drops of humanity's own heart's blood, — that humanity which is both His and ours.

And there is not a fibre of our being but reaches up blindly to intertwine itself with His, — the God we know in Christ, — to receive His glory and strength into its own life; there is not a thought or a hope within us that does not dimly struggle towards Him, to be inspired and transfigured by the power of His Presence.

"Deep strike thy roots, O heavenly Vine,
Within our earthly sod!
Most Human and yet most Divine;
The flower of man and God!"

V

THE HEAVENLY BREATH

What we need to-day more than anything is faith in the Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit. We need to believe in God's presence around us in nature: God's presence within us in our souls; in one as in the other. He lives in nature; He also lives and moves in our hearts. If we kept our souls open to Him, He would send tides of vital heat into them also. If we did not close our hearts, the Heavenly Comforter would enter and dwell with us.

JAMES FREEMAN CLARKE.

The world itself is changed, and is no more the same that it was; it has never been the same, since Jesus left it. The air is charged with heavenly odors, and a kind of celestial consciousness, a sense of other worlds, is wafted on us in its breath. — It were easier to untwist all the beams of light in the sky, separating and expunging one of the colors, than to get the character of Jesus, which is the real gospel, out of the world.

HORACE BUSHNELL.

O Life that breathest in all sweet things
That bud and bloom upon the earth,
That fillest the sky with songs and wings,
That walkest the world through human birth;

O Life that lightest in every man
A spark of Thine own being's flame,
And wilt that spark to glory fan, —
Our listening souls would hear Thy Name.

Thou art the Eternal Christ of God,
The Life unending, unbegun;
The Deity brightening through the clod;
The Presence of the Invisible One!

V.

The Heavenly Breath.

THE breath of Christ is in the world, and that alone makes its air sweet and wholesome to breathe. Always it has been felt, for the Son and the Father are the *I Am*, eternally One. His Spirit was striving with men long before He walked among them in human form through the streets of Jerusalem and along the shores of the Lake of Galilee; always is He the One Inspirer of human goodness, alike among heathen and Jewish and Christian races, alike among those who have never heard His human Name, and those who, having heard it, have not acknowledged that Name as Divine. Everywhere and through all time and eternity He is the Awakener of souls to

the love of purity and truth and righteousness. The Holy Spirit did not first come into the world when Christ went out of it ; that Spirit was always here. And the Holy Spirit never has left humanity,—else would it be a body without breath, a corpse. Men have tried to live without Him, and the result is shown in the misery, the weariness, the heart-sickness among them. What fresh air is to our physical well-being, the Holy Spirit is to the health of our whole being ; for the soul and the body of man on earth are inseparable, and both are sustained by the same divine influences. "For as the body liveth by the soul, even so the soul liveth by God."

"The world is the vesture of the unseen God: its whole atmosphere is charged with His presence. Whosoever, in humble faith, and with a heart which longs for truth and goodness, opens his mouth and draws in his breath, that man is straightway filled—not with some vague influence

only, but with all the fullness of God. The desire and the power to do right which he acquires is none other than the central force which animates the world. He lives and moves in God." [1]

Life! How can it be that the Divine Life can enter into and dwell in a human life? It is a mystery, and yet the mystery in which we are all immortally embosomed. It was illustrated in the first man, when the breath of God made him a living soul, and in every new-born child the illustration is repeated. The life whereby we are human beings is God's life within us; we may live it as an earthly or as a spiritual one. And there is a beautiful earthly life, faithful in all its natural relations, that opens instinctively to the entrance of that which is larger, fuller, and more spiritual. But in a life of negative, harmless goodness man does not complete himself, does not fulfill the idea of his being. There are powers

[1] W. H. Fremantle.

latent within him which can only be developed by going out of himself and giving himself to others. He has within him unawakened energies which, if not permitted to unfold into ever-greatening activity, will leave him dwarfed and imperfect, and will at last dwindle and die. The first man, Adam, is but the human child. We are all born into that life of garden-innocence. The second man, Christ, is the Lord from heaven, into whose life of conquering holiness, of overflowing sympathy, of unwearying, abounding self-sacrifice, we must be re-born as the children of the Kingdom, or else fail of our full-grown humanity, —of the completeness both of our mortal and immortal inheritance.

"The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." God could not enter into and utter himself through that which was formless and void. The abysses of chaos were but a restless incoherence that could not shape His Name. Up through the dumb creation at last He

lifted one whom He had moulded to think His thoughts, to speak His words, and to do His works. Into him He breathed His own breath, His Spirit,— and man was revealed as the fully expressed word of God, — a living soul. Many creatures walked upon the earth, but man was the only *person* among them, — the visible representative of the invisible Person out of whose life he had issued. The breath which made him a living body God gave him in common with all animals; but the breath within that breath which man received was God's own Spirit, — that by which He Himself lives as a Person, — the being who is the Centre and the Source of life and love to all other beings. This is the high estate for which we were created; but alas! we find our glorious habitation in ruins.

To be born of the Spirit as Christ was born — knowing no fatherhood but that of God — would be to have a perfect humanity. Because we are of mortal paren-

tage, and receive on our entrance into this earthly life an inheritance of low and sinful tendencies, we "must be born again." The Spirit must breathe through our whole nature, and shape it anew into spiritual life. Man is made in all things in the image of God, whose character is expressed to us by His Will. Every human being has a character also, which is unfolded in a will; he must be free to act, or he would not be like God. But here is where the evil difference between ourselves and Him is evident. He chooses only good, while we are always choosing the wrong, because our will is self-will, and refuses to harmonize itself with His. To make His Will, instead of our own, the law of our life, is to be "born of the Spirit," is to be created anew.

The key-note of Christ's earthly character and work was the entire blending of His will with the Will of God. "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him who sent me."

"I do always the will of my Father which is in heaven."

Nothing but the setting up of his own will separates man from his true life in God. And, in the strong language of an old writer, — "Nothing burneth in hell but self-will." The human will must be harmonized with the Divine Will, the human spirit must be reunited to the Divine Spirit, or hopeless disaster overtakes the soul. To accomplish this restoration is the work of the invisible Christ within us. His Spirit broods always over the chaotic waste of our restless lives, — restless and shapeless until re-created into the image of His Father, and re-inspired with the breath of His own eternal being. We find ourselves, we know ourselves, we *are* ourselves, only in Him.

It is the Spirit that shapes the life. When the Spirit of God has free movement through a human spirit, then only is the man truly and entirely alive. Then sin is hated for its innate horror, and is

cast out of every thought; then truth shines through every motive and action with its own resplendence, and the man sees no beauty in that which is not true; then righteousness is as natural to him as the motion of his hands and feet; then he loves his fellow-beings, because the Life within him is Love, and he knows no other.

Spirit is breath; and the breath of the living being is both inhaled and exhaled. The proof that we are alive in God is that we are through our whole nature and character breathing forth into the world the very life of God;—not only receiving Him ourselves, but giving abroad, as the effluence of grateful and loving lives, His holiness, His blessedness and His peace.

The scoffers at our Lord among the Jews said "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" And the scoffers of our time ask "How can he breathe into us his breath?" But they who have hun-

gered and thirsted after His righteousness have been filled with a deep, abounding life which they knew was not their own, but His. And they among whom these renewed ones have lived have been witnesses to the power and beauty and joy that have emanated from them. To approach some persons whom we now and then meet in the jostling earth-multitude, is suddenly to be aware of a new sweetness in the air, — the warmth and fragrance of the Heavenly Breath; of a new vigor thrilling all our powers, — the Strength of the Holy One in whom they live. They are not aware of it, but they are giving forth spiritual health with every breath they exhale; they are filling the world with the Spirit of God.

To have the Spirit of God within us, and to live our lives as utterances of that Spirit, — the glory and the privilege are past the power of words to express, or of thoughts to think! Yet it is the human privilege of every one of us; the very

purpose for which we were created. To know Christ intimately in His ever-present, immortal personality, — more intimately than He could have been known even to those who gathered about Him and loved Him in His holy humanity, — this is the gift offered to us upon whom His glory has been unfolding through the ages. And yet how blind we are to the heavenly opportunity! Some one has written this true sentence: —

"There is a treasure hid in such sayings as these — 'I will manifest myself unto him,' 'we will make our abode with him,' which few among us even guess at. We read the words as we might walk over the turf under which there is hidden gold. It is a great matter, however, to have been made aware of the existence of the treasure, though we may as yet have made small way towards taking possession of it."

Like many another great truth, this of the Holy Spirit has been well-nigh hid-

den from sight behind wordy technicalities and obscuring theories. But light makes way for itself. A generation just behind us began to listen to words like these: —

"Our modern piety appears to have been limited and partially dwarfed, almost universally, by the admission of certain opinions or impressions of the Holy Spirit which are referable wholly to scientific theology, and which need to be revised. — In the Scriptures He is represented as being the Spirit of Christ, — nay, Christ Himself. This also by Christ Himself; for He says, in His promise of the Comforter, '*I* will come to you,' — and to His apostles, 'Lo! *I* am with you always.' And this is said, evidently, that we may conceive the Spirit socially, as being in some proper sense Christ Himself, with us always in all the feeling of Jesus — breathing His feeling as love and life into every fibre of our inner man. The Word is nigh us, even in our mouth and heart. The

Christ of the garden and the cross is with us, suing at our heart, and striving to communicate all that we could hope from the love of Gethsemane and Calvary socially present in us."[1]

To say that we have the Holy Spirit within us, is to say that we are breathing the very breath of Christ.

The mistake of theologians has been in making a theory of Christ, as if he were somebody apart from God, whom it was their duty to explain to mankind. The Holy Spirit is the eternal Presence of Christ in His world. And where the Son is, there always is the Father.

When Our Lord met His disciples on that first evening after He arose from the grave, He breathed on them, and said: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost!" What could that mean but that now as His form retreated from them into the unseen, He Himself was with them and in them, the inmost soul of their being. He

[1] Horace Bushnell.

had told them that His life must be incorporated into theirs as if it were their own flesh and blood ; He had given Himself for them that thus He might live in them ; and now to His body and blood He added His breath, — the Spirit wherewith He was one with His Father, — the Spirit which should be in them, an ever-present inspiration to a holy human life like His own.

Those disciples seem never afterwards to have been for a moment perplexed as to His meaning. Questions regarding the " nature and offices of the Holy Ghost," such as have disturbed many of His followers since, seem never once to have occurred to them. It was He Himself, who, with His Father, was now to be with them always, as The Spirit, the inmost breath of their being, impelling them to do His will and to carry onward His work, by whatever way of lowly obedience or heroic self-sacrifice He should appoint. And from the hour when, having come

together at His word, they received the witness of His presence in a mighty rushing wind and tongues of flame, to the day of their death, they each and all bore testimony by their words and their lives, to the living Christ within them — the Spirit though whom they had arisen from the grave of sin to become sharers in His immortality.

And as they went forth to do their Master's work, counting themselves now no longer their own, but His, — how the personality of each stands out, strong and distinct! There is no possibility of mistaking Peter for John, or John for Paul. The Master's word is spoken by them all, but the voice of each is his own. The humble fishermen and the tent-maker have been recognized all over the world, have made themselves each separately felt by their character and their words, as no statesman or orator ever has. They lost their littleness, and found their greatness in Christ.

We never reach our own true individuality, nor are we able to recognize that of others, until we live together as invisible spirits, each separately receptive of the spirit of God. To think of human beings in herds, as "the masses," is both unspiritual and inhuman. As our own natures enlarge and acquire distinctness, we perceive the greatness — the individual glory of every other human being.

The great personality of Christ brings out the personality of every disciple. Every one must see a new value in his own life when he remembers that the Wonderful One has lived and died for him. His Name is above every other name, and ennobles every name with which it is associated. We breathe it upward out of our unworthiness, as the lower atmosphere rises and cleanses itself from its impurities by blending with the higher. The name of Jesus is that high, pure sweetness of the air of humanity in which all human names aspire to lose themselves, that they

may find the real essence and fragrance of their own meaning. We feel Him both in our lives and above them, as our firmament opens into and yet is part of the unfathomable ether that surrounds us. Only through His humanity is our humanity immortal. Only through Him do we understand our own nature, and know and feel what it is to be human. By sharing with us the mortal part of our humanity, He has shown us that it is but the thin, transparent clothing of the immortal part.

The presence of His Spirit in us is as light and air in all growing and breathing organisms, felt not only in the expansion of blossom and leaf and tree, but down to the hidden roots which seem to hold us to the earth, yet are in reality, by all the subtle forces they concentrate within themselves, sending us upward to the heavens. And so the Name of Christ, as it echoes along the ages and from the lips of young and old, of rich and poor,

through familiar prayers and hymns, cannot be too often repeated, if spoken with reverence. The words that seem to us worn threadbare are beautiful and sacred forever, as expressing the aspiration of human hearts like our own, that have throbbed out the holiest impulses of their earthly life to the music of those old prayers and hymns, unconscious and sometimes heedless — even as we also are — of the glorious realities that they convey. They fill the heaven of the soul with melodies sweeter for their familiarity, like birds that come back to us and gladden the skies of every returning spring.

Yet merely to name His Name is an unmeaning formality, unless we so signify that we receive the power of His life and character into ours as ministers of His Spirit to other souls. The apostles and early disciples never thought of the Holy Ghost as exclusively theirs; — it was new life thrilling through all their being, but it was life given them to impart, — new

health and hope to be breathed into lives stifling for want of the Heavenly Breath. It was no magical transfer of a mystical power: it was the Healer's presence made manifest through them to sick and dying souls.

The Holy Spirit in man, the Presence of Christ in humanity, is as air to human breath, as blood to the throbbing heart. It is the life of the Father, communicated through the Son; — the Spirit of the Father and the Son, that, abiding in the human spirit, penetrates every vein and tissue of our entire being with His immortal vitality. And as Christ our Lord is in the world, even so are we in the world, — to breathe forth into it from our lives the Eternal Life of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

It was the sorrow of our Lord's heart, while on earth, that men would not accept the abundant life of His Father which He came to bring. And still He stands waiting before our closed hearts, imploring

leave to enter with His heavenly gifts, — Himself His heavenliest gift. With the beloved disciple, the exile of Patmos, we still listen to His pleading accents: —

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and sup with him, and he with me."

"*Any man*," — any soul may have the friendship of Christ, or these His words are without meaning. His heart aches with pity for our loneliness, and for the poverty that we misname riches. He will listen to what we have to tell Him, He will take what we have to offer Him, however simple the story, however humble the fare. And He will give to us the heavenly food wherewith His earthly life was sustained, the meat that men knew not of. While we talk with Him and He with us, He will unfold to us the secret of His glorious earthly career — the blessed open secret that He would have us share with the whole world, — "not to be ministered unto,

but to minister." Filled with His Spirit, we shall not desire to claim Him for ourselves alone. Our hearts will unfold with His open-heartedness, and lonely souls will seek shelter with us, attracted by the light and warmth of His Presence.

They who have once set wide the doors of their being to Him have caught from the presence of this Divine Guest their first hint of the possible rapture of living; they have had in the face of Christ their first true glimpse of God. —

O Spirit whose Name is the Saviour,
Come enter this spirit of mine,
And make it forever Thy dwelling —
A home wherein all things are Thine!

Leave in me no darkness unlighted,
Unwarmed by Thy truth's holy fire;
No thought which Thou canst not inhabit;
No purpose Thou dost not inspire!

Oh what is so sweet as to love Thee,
And live with Thee always in sight?
Lord, enter this house of my being,
And fill every room with Thy light.

VI

THE PERFECT FRIENDSHIP

My God! with what surpassing love
Thou lovest all on earth!
How good the least good is to Thee!
How much each soul is worth! —

How Thou canst think so well of us,
Yet be the God Thou art,
Is darkness to my intellect,
But sunshine to my heart!

FREDERICK WILLIAM FABER.

O God, O Kinsman loved, but not enough!
O man, with eyes majestic after death,
Whose feet have toiled along our pathways rough,
Whose lips drawn human breath!

Come, weary-eyed with seeking in the night
Thy wanderers strayed upon the pathless wold,
Who, wounded, dying, cry to Thee for light,
And cannot find their fold.

And deign, O Watcher with the sleepless brow,
Pathetic in its yearning, deign reply!
Is there, oh, is there aught that such as Thou
Wouldst take from such as I?

Are there no briers across Thy pathway thrust,
Are there no thorns that compass it about, —
Nor any stones that Thou wilt deign to trust
My hands to gather out?

JEAN INGELOW.

VI.

The Perfect Friendship.

THE being who has no desire for friendship is hardly to be thought of as a human being. The deepest wish that the heart recognizes in itself when it first opens out consciously towards the world, is the desire for love — for a friend. Isolation of soul is unnatural. And we instinctively feel that what is inmost in us, is so because it is inmost in God. He must have brought us into being, because He wanted our love. He loved the very thought of us before we appeared — the thought of what we should be to ourselves, to each other, and to Him. He would not sit upon a lonely throne; He would gather around Him intelligences who should share His kingliness, who

should learn to rule over nature and their own souls.

He would be more to us than the Former of our bodies; He would be the Father of our spirits, and so would bring us into the nearest and dearest relation to Himself. And whatever other close and beautiful relation might follow from our being created human, that would He be to us also, that in every most intimate way of loving we might love Him and be loved by Him. He would enter our humanity, and would converse with us through the lips of His perfect Son, that His own thoughts might become audible to us in a human voice; would show in a person like ourselves, in a life like our own, that true image of Himself which every child of His was created to bear. By every possible method, He would keep our visible existence filled and flooded with His invisible Life, so that we should never make the mistake of thinking that our home is in this outer world, while we really belong to Him and are heirs of His unseen kingdom.

God made man to be His companion and friend. And He made man like Himself in giving him a desire for companionship and friendship. Every outreach of our human affections He filled with a deeper spiritual yearning — the attraction towards Himself. Whether man knows it or not, it is the Divine love within the human towards which he is always most irresistibly impelled. But while He made us to love, He made us also free to choose or to refuse love; and to refuse the Divine love is to refuse immortality.

The spirit of man may linger among low affections until it becomes as the spirit of the beast that goeth downward. In trying to live without God, man loses his real personality. Living only according to his own will, he is but one of an aggregate of individuals, each counting in the mass, but of small distinctive value by itself, as it is with the animal tribes. It can hardly be said that he is human — certainly he has not attained to any high

ideal of humanity — until he is inspired by divine impulses and purposes.

So inspired, he does not separate himself from other souls. He still belongs to the "great multitude which no man can number;" but now the Spirit of God breathing through his and through every other renewed life, awakens in each a music of its own which is in perfect harmony with all the rest. There is a Divine Thought behind and within every one of his human thoughts, which shapes and reveals its separate beauty, as light touches a pebble and transforms it into a gem. And he himself, instead of being only a creature among many creatures, stands forth as a being, a character wherein an immortal destiny is taking glorious shape through the moulding power of the Spirit within. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." He who feels the Divine Hand at work upon his soul cares little for the pressure of conventional authorities or standards. While he is bound

to all men, he is subservient to none. So the manhood or the womanhood within has freedom to grow to its own peculiar development of grace or of strength. This it is to be a *person*, growing forever into the image of the One Divine Person, — God.

As in a strange city, the very multitude thronging the streets gives us a sense of intensest solitude, from the absence of those dearest to us, — so in the multiplicity of half-selfish, half-social ties by which we and the human beings around us seem often meaninglessly linked together, —

> "The greetings where no kindness is, and all
> The dreary intercourse of daily life," —

we often feel ourselves left in utter spiritual separation from our kind. We do not like to believe what we are yet aware of, with Emerson, that in society — as it usually is — we must "descend to meet." We are sure that we were made for nobler modes of alliance.

"Sometimes life grows so lonely! The

strongest men crave a relationship to things more deep than ordinary intercourses involve. They want something profounder to rest upon, — something which they can reverence as well as love; and then comes God.

> "'Call ye life lonely? Oh, the myriad sounds
> Which haunt it, proving how its outer bounds
> Join with eternity, where God abounds!'

"Then the sense of something which they cannot know, of some one greater, infinitely greater than themselves surrounds their life, and there is strength and peace, — as when the ocean takes the ship in its embrace, as when the rich, warm atmosphere enfolds the earth." [1]

"That ye may be filled with all the fullness of God." It is an over-brimming Heart that leans out of the heavens to lay itself close against ours. Nature stands beside Him looking toward us with the smile of one who has secrets behind secrets which she is waiting to communicate

[1] Phillips Brooks.

when we shall be ready to receive them. All beautiful knowledges of the earth and the heavens are hidden in His mind, for us; all tender and glorious associations of time and eternity. "Ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's;" therefore "all things are yours." The links in the chain are complete. The promise has no limit in its fulfillment. It is "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." We are not always to have just the things we ask for; they would not prove to be the things we really desired, without that vast margin of "exceeding abundantly above" with which all our human hopes are surrounded, as the earth is by her firmament of stars. Unfathomable depths of love are forever opening to us through the revelation of God in Christ.

It is this feeling of infiniteness that we crave, that we believe in, and sometimes, though rarely, find in human friendship. The deepest love leads us through and beyond itself into the Infinite Heart, whose

calm throbbing steadies us with the permanence and the peace of eternity. In the love of Christ we feel every human affection sustained, developed, transfigured. In its fullness is the fulfillment of our innermost dreams, the answer to our unuttered prayers. The silences, the weary postponements of time are forgotten, when through them we hear the reassurance of Christ's own voice: —

> "Mine is an unchanging love,
> Higher than the heights above,
> Deeper than the depths beneath,
> Free and faithful, strong as death."

Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures words are hardly found strong enough or warm enough to express God's love for His people, — understood by them in an exclusive sense, but unfolded by Christ and His apostles into the broadest human inclusiveness. The tone is that of loving entreaty and expostulation, as of One who cannot bear to let His friends go away from Him to inevitable loss and ruin;

"Return unto me, and I will return unto you." "Turn ye, for why will ye die?"

And as if, when the Father's own call proved unavailing, He hoped a brother's voice would be heard, He sends His Son down to lead home the wanderers. The voice of Christ has a pathos as of indignant and surprised sorrow, when He says to the unbelieving Jews, "And ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life." Looking forward to His final sacrifice of Himself as an irresistible appeal, He exclaims, "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me."

What He had to give them was the lost secret of their own lives, the life of the Father Himself. If they could but understand what He desired to do for them, it must have seemed impossible to Him that they would be unwilling to be guided by His words. To those who did in a degree comprehend Him He said authoritatively, to prove their sincerity, "If ye love me, keep my commandments!"

What merely human being, however conscious of his own superior wisdom and integrity of purpose, would dare to make such a requirement of another — of even the humblest fellow-being who sought his friendship? It was because the Son was entirely one with the Father that He had the right and the privilege. To keep His commandments is to do the will of God.

"Christ stands before us always as an incarnation of faith and loyalty to God, an example of self-sacrificing devotion to truth. He is to be accepted in spirit and converted into an internal fact of our life. He is to live in us perpetually as the spirit of godliness. . . . We must eat the flesh and drink the blood of the spiritual Christ, and thus incorporate into our spiritual constitution the principles of faith and sacrifice, love and obedience, which He embodied." [1]

This is the true atonement — the union of man with God through entering into the

[1] Max Müller.

life of Christ. And such oneness as this is the secret of all great friendships. A life must *be* a life before it can blend with another life; a person must live for the same grand principles and purposes and sacrifices that animate the person he loves or whose love he seeks, before there can be any real and deep interchange of sympathies, before the true oneness of friendship can be attained. To be indeed a friend to a nobler being is to be ever learning to comprehend him better by living nobly as he does. This is what it means to be a friend of Christ. To love Him is to become like Him.

There is no more positive assurance in all the history of mankind, of the reality of one person to another person, than of Christ to Paul the Apostle; but he had never beheld his Master with his bodily eyes. His friendship for Christ was wholly a spiritual friendship; and he was so entirely in sympathy with Him that he could say: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth

in me;" "For me to live is Christ." Few, if any, have ever reached Paul's glorious loyalty; with most of us, the tender compassion of our Lord must take the place of His loving approval; but that never fails.

Yet not less real a Presence was Christ to Paul himself than He has been to the humblest and the most ignorant, down to our own time. One of the songs heard among the slave-women of the South before the days of their deliverance, was said by listeners who heard it from their own lips, to be almost heart-breaking in its pathos and in the passionate clinging of its trust:—

"Nobody knows the trouble I see;
Nobody knows but Jesus!"

Jesus was the only real friend the sad, heart-crushed singer knew. And if — as was probable — she had never been taught to shape her life according to His precepts, who shall dare to say that on that account He was less really her Helper and her Friend?

Mr. William Duncan, the missionary to the once cannibal Indians of the far Northwest, tells of one of those Indians who had just heard about Christ, lying at night in the door of his wigwam, when he supposed everybody about him to be asleep, and speaking softly out into the stillness words like these: "O Jesus, open thy heart to me!"

All hearts are needy of His love; but those who have felt their emptiness through long, slow, starving years, like this poor savage soul, are readiest to respond to the outpouring of the Divine Heart into theirs, — to believe in the nearness and the unfathomable tenderness of such a Heart. It is the humanity in the Divinity that the lonely soul first comprehends and seizes upon; it is that which makes the name of Jesus so satisfying and so dear: —

> "Jesus! Name all names above;
> Human name of God above."

A knightly mystic of the Middle Ages,

writing of those who "are enlightened with the true light," says that there is in them "a desire to go forward and get nearer to the Eternal Goodness; that is, to come to a clearer knowledge, and warmer love, and more comfortable assurance, and perfect obedience and subjection; so that every enlightened man could say, 'I would fain be to the Eternal Goodness, what his own hand is to a man.'"

This is what Christ in His earthly life was to God. And this is what every one who has come near to the Eternal Goodness of God in Christ must desire that his own relation to his Master and Lord should be. We may lay our hands into the hand of Christ, and be sure that they will be guided only to holy and loving deeds; for He is the Divine Love embodied; in Him we have the human friendship of God.

Most of us must have known, at some period of our lives, the power of close association with some large and loving

nature to bring out our own slumbering capabilities. We did not know what we were, until we saw ourselves in the light of their love. In that sunshine we found our growth. They gave us atmosphere in which to bloom and bear fruit. We were never so truly ourselves, as in their presence and under their influence. If this is true of human friendship, what must it be to live in constant communion with the Son of God and Man, the Friend who is great enough to take in all humanity, and at the same time understand and meet the separate wants of every lowliest soul? One who has the spiritual companionship of Christ — one who measures his own life by His perfect standard and will accept no lower — must develop a stronger individuality than other men. Every part of his nature must find its meaning and purpose within his Lord's. He cannot be with Christ without having every least motive, word, and deed irradiated with divine love, and the power of

that love must strengthen all his faculties to do their noblest work. The truest man in every sense is the man who is truly and thoroughly a Christian. And the most thorough Christian is always the most trustworthy friend.

One of the sweetest lessons learned at the feet of the Divine Friend, is the lesson of trust in our earthly friends. We may have proved their faithfulness many times, but there are a thousand ways for doubts to creep in. In nearness to the Perfect One we know the perfect love that casteth out fear, — we know that love means trust, confidence, belief in our friend, though an imperfect being, because he is our friend. If our soul has once had a glimpse of his soul and has seen his truth, suspicion is treason.

"Everywhere and always any lofty conception of trust has been compelled not to stop short of this: such an entrance into the nature and character of the trusted person that even when he seemed to be un-

reasonable and disappointing and unkind, the faithful soul could trust him still."

We should soon lose our faith in God and man if we expected always to have the inexplicable made clear; and we should also lose the power of comprehending personal character, which, if great and strong, must continually be developing in unexpected ways.

"The recompense for not distrusting and suspecting a friend, for assuming that he means you well even when you cannot understand him, even when his acts would bear a hard construction, is, that you come to be acquainted with him, to enter into his character, to discover all the deep hidden sympathies of it.

> "'You must love him ere to you
> He will seem worthy of your love.'"

The living, loving, invisible Christ can be made comprehensible only to the soul that loves Him. If he hides Himself from that soul for a time, it is for a truer revealing of Himself afterwards. The rev-

elation of His being and character is the sunlight into which the flower of the soul unfolds its own ideal, and gives back beauty for light.

"Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace!" Other friendships are the ripples on the sea, but He is the sea itself, and the ripples find their place and calm their restlessness in Him. The unity of His being receives and steadies our changeful lives, and we know with Him the

> "Central peace subsisting at the heart
> Of endless agitation."

Life flows towards life, sometimes as harmony, sometimes as discord; but the Great Musician knows how to find the deeper harmony within the discord, and we learn with trembling fingers to strike the mysterious keys with Him. Enough for us that we are permitted to help Him make His music, and may ourselves be strains in the one glorious, eternal song of His Being.

VII

VISIONS AND DUTIES

Man, who walketh in a show,
Sees before him, to and fro,
Shadow and illusion go:
All things flow and fluctuate;
Now contract and now dilate.
In the welter of this sea,
Nothing real is but Thee;
In this whirl of swooning trance,
Thou alone art permanence.

JOHN G. WHITTIER.

There may come to him the vision — clearer, surer than the ground on which he treads, or than the foot that treads it — the vision of an Everlasting Spiritual Substance, most Human and yet most Divine, who can endure; and who, standing beneath all things, can make their spiritual substance endure likewise, though all worlds and æons, birth and growth and death, matter and space and time, should melt in very deed, —

"And, like the baseless fabric of a vision,
Leave not a rack behind."

CHARLES KINGSLEY.

When all is said and done, the rapt saint is found the only logician.

R. W. EMERSON.

VII.

Visions and Duties.

SPIRITUAL habits of thought are so foreign to the minds of many excellent people that they dispose of all intense religious expression summarily by saying with an air of half-patronizing forbearance: "Oh, that is *mysticism!*" — a word which has come to suggest almost any vague grouping of sentiment and idea that exaggerates the indistinct into the impossible; as a mist gathering around a mountain-summit in the distance at first apparently increases its height and then obscures it altogether.

A real mystic is one who sees so much more than ordinary men that they cannot believe he sees anything at all, but only shuts his eyes and dreams. While other

eyes rest upon surfaces, he looks through things, into their spiritual foundations, and is aware of the eternal Substance which underlies appearances. The Old Testament prophets were mystics. All prophetic power is a seeing of the unseen, — an unfolding of that which *is* out of that which appears. We should all be prophets if we could truly see into the heart and soul of things. Every great teacher of God's truth is in some sense a mystic. The apostle must first be the seer. The strength of Paul's ministry grew from his steadily looking "not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen."

There are dreams which are only fantasies, and there are dreams which are visions. There is an incoherent, bewildered mysticism which is no more like illuminated insight than the dream that results from indigestion is like a vision sent from God. The unnatural ecstasies of the ascetic bear no resemblance to the

living, glowing symbolism unrolled through the heart of the loving and beloved John, in the Apocalypse.

The poet who has a great song to sing is always a mystic. He must be both Seer and Hearer of things beyond mortal sense, before he can charm our souls with his words. He must have gone deep into the realm of spiritual vision, before he can

> "See and tell
> Of things invisible to mortal sight."

No artist can paint nature truly — not so much as a flower, — though he may produce a pleasing imitation of one, — unless he sees with spiritual eyes. Nay, no one can do the commonest work faithfully — as well as he might do it — except he does it under the loving, guiding eyes of a Master unseen, in His service and for His sake; and so "makes drudgery divine."

There is always the danger of substituting raptures for duty, — exalted emotion for rigid integrity and conscientious effort; but he who looks into his Lord's eyes

among the poor, the suffering, and the fallen." [1]

These words are written of a group of spiritually-minded persons who in the fourteenth century were known in Germany as the "Friends of God." The preaching of John Tauler, a leader among them, is said to have been distinguished "by its searching application of religious principles to the moral questions arising in the various emergencies of inward experience and outward life."

How practical this mystical preacher could be, these words of his will show: —

"One can spin, another can make shoes; and these also are gifts of the Holy Ghost. I tell you, if I were not a priest, I would esteem it a great gift that I was able to make shoes, and would try to make them so well as to be a pattern to all."

"Works of love," he said, "are more acceptable to God than lofty contemplation: art thou engaged in devoutest

[1] Charles Kingsley.

prayer, and God wills that thou go out and preach, or carry broth to a sick brother, thou shouldst do it with joy."

And he proved the sincerity of his teaching by his services among the sick and dying when the Black Death visited Strasburg, and priests enough could not be found to perform the funeral rites, — facing a papal interdict in the discharge of his sacred duty as a minister of Christ.

There may be saints who have no higher mission than to sit still and wrap themselves in ecstatic dreams; but those who are closest to their Lord's heart know that His life, when it beats through theirs, moves their hands irresistibly towards acts of tender human sympathy like His "who went about doing good."

Can we imagine that Mary, who sat at Jesus' feet and drank the sweetness of His thoughts, did not find in them an inspiration to more beneficent ministries than the multiplied household details that gave her sister Martha so much unnecessary anx-

iety? What a welcome must she have met everywhere among the careworn, the sin-sick, and the lonely-hearted, — she whose soul was a treasury of His inmost, divinest sympathies! His messages must have been borne through her lips as constantly and as naturally as the air she breathed. That blending of her Lord's life with her own was indeed "the one thing needful" to give unity of purpose and action to the years intervening between His Cross and her own grave. It must have made her presence a perpetual blessing wherever she sojourned. It was truly the "better part," — the part of consecration to highest and holiest service, which could never be taken from her.

> "O that the loving woman, she who sat
> So long a listener at her Master's feet,
> Had left us Mary's Gospel, — all she heard
> Too sweet, too subtle for the ear of man!"

It is common to speak of the visionary and the practical as if the two had nothing to do with each other; but the truth is

that each is nothing, apart from the other. "Beware of talking contemptuously of 'mere morality!'" exclaims Robertson. "If we must choose between two things which ought never to be divided — moral principle and religious sentiment — there is no question which most constitutes the character which is 'not far from the Kingdom of heaven.'" "Character," says another, "can no more be built upon thought and feeling than a house can be built upon air."

There is no spirituality so great as to set any being free from moral obligations. God Himself cannot violate His own laws. Nor is there any perfect morality possible without spirituality, — which is to human actions what sympathetic expression is to the mechanical utterance of words. Morality without spirituality is like a city of marble palaces monotonously perfect in architecture, through whose streets no breeze wanders, no stream ripples into music. Spirituality without morality is

like wind that spends its force among aimless clouds, leaving the earth beneath it a breathless, unwatered desert. Yet there is such a thing as spiritual morality. It is the doing of the right for Love's sake, from love to God. This is the code of Christ.

We may assure ourselves that we have no right to our visions unless we attend faithfully to our duties. The New Jerusalem both descends and ascends. It is of the heavens, but it must be firmly built up and solidly buttressed through its whole earthly superstructure. The humblest hod-carrier on the rising walls of the Holy City — for there is necessary spiritual toil which corresponds to what we wrongly call drudgery — does a nobler work than the self-absorbed angel, if such there can be, who flies lazily over it upon a cloud, giving no heart or thought or touch toward its uprearing. Every act of kindness, every sympathetic word, every just or generous deed, every righteous and loving life, however lowly, is a stone laid in the foun-

dations of the City of God, to glow there forever as topaz or sapphire or amethyst. For the light of God is hidden in the thoughts of human hearts as the sunlight is in all precious stones; both must be brought high up under the searching eye of heaven, in that light to see and receive The Light, and so be made manifest.

And as the vision lights the soul to duty, so the duty well done proves the reality of the vision. A holy heaven *needs* the unshaken testimony of a righteous earth to its immutability. So Wordsworth sings: —

> "Stern daughter of the voice of God,
> O Duty! . . .
> Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong;
> And the most ancient heavens, through thee, are fresh and strong!"

The vision and the work are one. Out of the burning heart of the sun the ray strikes down to the roots of the grass, and the little plant brings up the light it has received, and shakes it abroad with the

color of its own life upon the air. Is not the sunshine *in* the grass ?

Out of the heart of the Lord God a divine ray shines down into the earth-field of the soul, and it springs up " a plant and flower of light," and spreads abroad the radiance of the heavens with which it is filled. Is not the life of that soul the very life of God, colored and perfumed by the peculiar nature given to it at creation ?

The vision of God is the source of all the noblest putting-forth of human energies. With that immortal warmth at the core of his being, the man can but *feel* eternally alive, as indeed he *is*. And he is alive because there is a living Christ. We say the words, — do we believe the beautiful, the stupendous truth, that the throbbing of our hearts is the very throbbing of His, — that He is divinely, humanly alive for and in every man, closer to him than his own being, though unacknowledged and unknown? If He be not with us thus, — the real personal Christ,

— then is He not risen from the dead for us at all, and our faith is vain. There is none to cleanse us from our sins by imparting to us the purity and the holiness of His own being, by loving us divinely, and yet in that human way in which alone we can learn to love Him back again.

The thought is vast in its beauty; we cannot grasp it; yet is there no other thought of God for us to think. We have not three Gods. God is the Holy Spirit, and His Eternal Presence with us is the Saviour, Christ. In Him our humanity is forever at home with His Divinity. We know Him. He is ours, and we are His.

It is not merely that we have the lovely and perfect example of One who has lived our earth-life and resisted its temptations, and so has shown us how to live. This He has done; but were this all, He would be to us only a guiding memory, a sacred ideal. It is what He *is* to us that saves us; it is His abiding Presence with us as an intimate, unfailing Friend whose life is so

one with His Father's that the friendship He gives us is the very friendship of God. It is no imagination. Christ does draw us to His heart and hold us there in a union so close that His standards become our standards, His sympathies our sympathies, and the overflow of His love goes out through our lives towards all our fellow-beings.

This consciousness of the Unseen Presence sometimes rises to ecstasy for which there is no adequate utterance in words.

"All real experiences of God's communion with our nature partake of a joy with which a stranger cannot intermeddle. To speak of them seems to betray a divine secret, to make common the place where the Most High condescends to meet us. At least we cannot speak of such experience until it is gone. So in the most intense moments of their inward life men do not speak to one another their joy, their love, their trust, their awe. At the touch of imperfect speech we fall out of

our mystic fellowship; instead of the divine fact we have only its human representation; — and a consciousness of the most perfect sympathy needs no utterance of words." [1]

"What He works in the souls of those with whom He holds direct converse," says Tauler, "none can say, nor can one man give account of it to another; but he only who has felt it knows what it is; and even he can tell thee nothing of it, save only that in very truth God hath possessed the ground of his soul."

And Saint Augustine breathes these words, as if in half-musing close conversation with an invisible companion: —

"Sometimes Thou admittest me to an affection very unusual, in my inmost soul, — rising to a strange sweetness, which, if it were perfected in me, I know not what in it would not belong to the life to come." To read that eloquent recital in the "Confessions," of his conversation

[1] J. H. Thom.

with Monica his mother, at the garden-window in Ostia, just before her death, thrills us and awes us as if we were listening at the gate of heaven to words which mortals have no right to hear. The great soul of the saint had struggled painfully through outward things to the inward eternal life, into constant communion with his Lord. Yet this to him was no selfish joy, no special gift to himself. He speaks for all souls in this his earnest ejaculation: "O Thou who so carest for every one of us as if Thou caredst for him only; and so for all, as if they were but one!"

How real is the presence of the Invisible Friend, the Consoler, to the loving woman who chants to Him this melody of sorrow!

"Speak low to me, my Saviour, low and sweet
From out the hallelujahs — sweet and low —
Speak to me as to Mary at Thy feet!
And if no precious gums my hands bestow,
Let my tears drop like amber, while I go
In reach of Thy divinest voice complete
In humanest affection."

Yet none ever felt more keenly than the

true-hearted singer of this verse, that the Eye which looks into every human soul with divinest love pierces it also with most unsparing truth. If we have ever had a real glimpse of ourselves in some sudden consciousness of the Ineffably Holy One close at hand, searching us with His penetrating purity, we can attest the genuineness of the unrepressed emotion in Mrs. Browning's strong sonnet: —

"If all the gentlest-hearted friends I know
Concentred in one heart their gentleness
That still grew gentler, till its pulse was less
For life than pity — I should yet be slow
To bring my own heart nakedly below
The palm of such a friend, that he should press
Motive, condition, means, appliances,
My false ideal joy and fickle woe,
Out full to light and knowledge. I should fear
Some plait between the brows, some rougher chime
In the free voice. — O angels, let the flood
Of your salt scorn dash on me! Do ye hear
What *I* say, who bear calmly all the time
This everlasting face-to-face with God?"

Yet out of the very lowest depths of bitter humiliation the soul cries out, "Let

me fall into the hands of God, and not into the hands of man!" The largest heart is always the tenderest; and "His compassions are infinite." Sinning, yet repentant, we belong only to Him. He

"Knows all, yet loves us better than He knows."

And His presence brings also to the dullest task-work the rest and the inspiration of a perfect companionship. The vision is for the lowly sewing-girl no less than for the thinker of great thoughts and the teacher of lofty truths. She may sing at her monotonous toil, as one of her poet-sisters had sung for her:—

"The busy fingers fly, the eyes may see
Only the glancing needle that they hold;
But all my life is blossoming inwardly,
And every breath is like a litany;
While through each labor, like a thread of gold
Is woven the sweet consciousness of Thee!"

This "sweet consciousness" of the presence of a Divine Friend with us in our little occupations and interests is deepened infinitely by the certainty that

thousands of lowly hearts are sharing it with us, — that for every one of our brothers and sisters there is a separate entrance into "the secret place of the Most High," through which no other one can be admitted. Every soul's secrets, joyous or painful, which it would be impossible to unfold to another soul, are safe "under the shadow of the Almighty;" and we and they are hidden together in that soft darkness which is only a more tender and comforting Light. Our sorrows, which often seem to separate us, are really drawing us nearer to one another in Him. We have a more reverent sympathy for the sufferer who is shut away from us to the sole companionship of God.

"Let the fact be fully pondered that there is a woe that presses down separately on every man's soul, and that he, like myself, is wrestling hard with it, though it comes to each man in variant shape, and suited to his condition, — let this fact be pondered as it should be, and every man

will look upon every other man as bound to himself by a more interesting and tender tie. . . .

"I doubt whether God ever won a soul to heaven on which He had not first let fall some separate drops of grief which are from their very nature a secret between the soul and her God. This holds especially true of that sense of unworthiness, that haunting conviction of sinfulness, of a spiritual nature unrestored, which to many minds is the most pungent of all hidden sorrows, and which from its very profundity no one can share and few can comprehend." [1]

Although in hours of inmost communion we are alone with God, and every other presence is an intrusion, we do not at such times forget our fellow-beings; we are then often most truly remembering them; it is for their sakes that He has spoken to us. So great a blessing as a visit from Him can hardly be for ourselves alone; He

[1] E. H. Sears.

has a message for other souls, to send by us.

"When God comes to man, man looks round for his neighbor," — says George MacDonald. And again, in another connection: —

"As I draw nearer and nearer to the invisible world, all my brothers and sisters grow dearer and dearer to me."

Surely, if heaven is home, we want the whole family to be going there with us. If this is our Father's world, all His children should be expecting Him constantly, and welcoming every sign of His coming. The greatest joy of living is in drawing closer together that we may find and follow the footsteps of His Son.

There is sadness around us everywhere, because we are living in a world which is full of God, and yet does not see Him. Most of us who think we see are more than half blind. The sorrow is none the less real for being an unconscious one. There are His firm foundations beneath

us, reaching up to meet our wavering feet; there are His eternal heavens above us, near and clear, beckoning us upward; but we linger, crippled, lonely, and dark, in our own shadows, beside the wide-open Beautiful Gate within which He waits for us with His healing, comforting strength.

It is not always to be so. Life knows that her Lord is near. She will arise and go forth to meet Him.

"The world sits at the feet of Christ,
Unknowing, blind, and unconsoled:
It yet shall touch His garment's fold,
And feel the heavenly Alchemist
Transmute its very dust to gold."

VIII

NATURE REDEEMED

The Lord is in His Holy Place,
In all things near and far.
Shekinah of the snowflake He,
And glory of the star;
And secret of the April wind
That stirs the field to flowers,
Whose little tabernacles rise
To hold Him through the hours.

W. C. GANNETT.

Come to me, come to me, O my God!
Come to me everywhere!
Let the trees mean Thee, and the grassy sod,
And the water and the air!

GEORGE MACDONALD.

The problem of restoring to the world original and eternal beauty, is solved by the redemption of the soul. The reason why the world lacks unity, and lies broken and in heaps, is because man is disunited with himself.

R. W. EMERSON.

VIII.

Nature Redeemed.

THROUGH the classifying habit which so conveniently serves the purpose of superficial thinkers, men are continually affixing mistaken labels to their fellow-beings. If one seeks God in his own soul, they call him a mystic. If another seeks Him in Nature they pronounce him a pantheist. How many a one has been accused of atheism, only because he could not call by name the Power that he felt pervading nature and his own being! But the sincere spiritual seeker comes properly under no classification. He is a child in search of his Father; a man looking for his hidden Friend.

It was the haunting presence of God everywhere that Shelley felt — Shelley,

"who tried so hard to be heathen and would still be Christian in his own despite" — when he wrote these lines: —

"The awful shadow of some unseen Power
Floats, though unseen, among us. . . .
Spirit of Beauty, that dost consecrate
With thine own hues all thou dost shine upon
Of human thought or form: . . .
Never joy illumed my brow
Unlinked with hope that thou wouldst free
This world from its dark slavery; —
That Thou, O awful Loveliness,
Wouldst give whate'er these words cannot express."

Shelley speaks to this "unseen Power" of himself as

"One who worships Thee,
And every form containing Thee . . .
Whom, Spirit fair, thy spells did bind
To fear himself, and love all human kind."

He says,

"I vowed that I would dedicate my powers
To Thee and Thine."

We do not discover in Shelley's short life anything more than a fitful fulfillment of his vow, and it may not have passed far beyond an aspiration. Yet it was a

true aspiration, and its earnestness recalls to mind the fervid ejaculations of Saint Augustine: —

"O Thou Beauty of ancient days, yet ever new! O Truth who art Eternity! and Love who art Truth! and Eternity who art Love! Thou art my God. To Thee do I sigh night and day!" The difference was that the saint went beyond the poet, not worshiping the form, which is but the shrine of Deity, but pursuing the Eternal Loveliness through all forms and through all the depths of his own being until he found Him, the God of righteousness, a living Person at once human and divine.

It was the half-developed religious thought of a period which seemed almost to demand two Gods, — one for external nature, and another for inner spiritual needs, — that insisted upon characterizing Wordsworth as a pantheist when he wrote of

> "A presence that disturbs me with the joy
> Of elevated thoughts: a sense sublime

Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man."

And still, with some, "it may be the fashion to call this pantheistic, but it is the true and necessary pantheism which affirms God in all, and all by Him, but which does not affirm that the all includes the whole of God."[1] Christianity need not be afraid of the word "Pantheism." Christianity is great enough to absorb all real ideas of God; it is penetrative enough to reach down to every thought of Him in the human soul and bring it up to testify of Him as the Only One.

Wordsworth's purpose bears witness to the truth of his spiritual insight:—

"By words
Which speak of nothing more than what we are,
Would I arouse the sensual from their sleep
Of death, and win the vacant and the vain
To noble raptures."

[1] Stopford Brooke.

He knew that the love of nature and the love of humanity are underneath, at their source, one and the same affection; and that they have power to uplift man's life from

> "The weight of meanness, selfish cares,
> Coarse manners, vulgar passions that beat in
> On all sides from the ordinary world."

With the soul of a seer, he foresaw Nature rising from her bondage, to be no longer the slave, but the bride of humanity; and as a poet, he sought

> "To chant the spousal verse
> Of this great consummation."

His song was that of all the prophets, in the Bible and out of it, the song of a world redeemed from its sorrows by the redemption of man from his evils, — the song of the new heaven and the new earth, "*wherein dwelleth righteousness.*" Wordsworth's poetry wins its glory from its depth of root among the rock-foundations of moral and spiritual law. While it unfolds its vision, it holds as sturdily

to truth and righteousness as Nature herself.

And Nature *is* the great moralist. Hear Emerson: "Things are saturated with the moral law. There is no escape from it. Violets and grass preach it. Rain and snow, wind and tides, — every change, every cause in nature, is nothing but a disguised missionary."

To see God in all things and to see all things in God, must be the only way of seeing Him or them truly. What is the reverse of this? To see things as things only, — as cold, lifeless material; to see Him as a great machine-builder, or artist, or ruler, separated from His works and looking down upon them from afar, having nothing more to do with them than to regulate the wheels, to shape the moulds and blend the colors, or to manage the affairs of the kingdom of which he is a non-resident. Could such a being really be God to suffering, sympathizing, aspiring men?

Nature may be to us a museum filled with correctly labeled specimens, or it may be a home in which everything is a beautiful gift alive with the bestower's love — a treasury of amulets and charms throbbing with sacred significance and prophetic suggestion. To see God in all things! How much that means when we look around upon this full, rich world, with its blossoms and its stars, its dew-drops, its torrents and rainbows, its grassy turf beneath our feet, and its gulfs of blue overhead! Yet how meaningless the whole without Him!

In what least atom of the visible creation shall we dare to say that God is *not?*

"God hath spread out His nets and snares over all creatures, so that he who desireth to perceive Him, may find Him in every one of them."

A powerful preacher of the Middle Ages puts it in this way:—

"I am as certain as that I live that nothing is so near me as God. He is nearer

to me than I am to myself. It is part of His very essence that He should be nigh and present to me. He is also nigh to a stone or a tree, but they do not know it. If a tree could know God, and perceive His presence as the highest of the angels perceives it, the tree would be blessed as the highest angel. And it is because man is capable of perceiving God, and knowing how nigh God is to him, that he is better off than a tree. And he is more blessed or less blessed in the same measure as he is aware of the presence of God.

"Whether a man walk out in the fields and say his prayers and feel God's presence, or whether he be in the church and feel God's presence, does he perceive Him any the better? If he do, it comes from his own infirmity: the difference is not on God's side, for God is in all things and places alike."

There is always a fascination about the ancient Greek polytheism, because of its mingling of beautiful persons with beauti-

ful nature. The Greek did not care for Nature except as associated with or represented by persons; they were interblended in his fancy with every visible organism, part of its shining or growing or flowing life. He could only make her seem alive by tenanting her forms with half-divine human shapes fashioned like his own; so he made her companionable. His gods were only a little above himself — too much like himself; — the low ideal easily sank into the lower idol. And yet, from the dreary deserts of modern unbelief, where not even a ghost is permitted to walk, a sigh may well be wafted toward

> "The fair humanities of old religion,
> The power, the beauty, and the majesty
> That had their haunts in dale, or piny mountain."

For there was in them a foreshadowing of the deeper religion, a dream of the nobler humanity, the unattained perfection — now a little more clearly outlined — towards which we are striving still. These lovely plants withered because their roots

were too near the earth-surface; these "humanities" were not even moralities. These classical divinities were immoral, unreliable, — a law unto themselves, acknowledging no eternal sanctities of Law. Those ancient seekers after God followed the universal instinct of the race in believing that there is a human thought hidden with the Divine Thought somewhere behind visible things; but it was the image of themselves shaped by their own minds that they bowed down before; and as the smallest object, held close before the eyes, can hide the sun, so their conceits of humanity eclipsed the vision of the Divinely Human One. He "was not in all their thoughts."

All the old religions failed because they lost out of them the only true knowledge of God, — that which is found in a pure and perfect human ideal. They who worshiped the beautiful in Nature overlooked the truth that her heart glows from its depths only with the eternal beauty of

holiness, — such as develops from within outward into the noblest types of manhood and womanhood. Their deities faded out into airy phantoms. Lifeless, soulless shapes themselves, they could impart no spiritual breath, no inspiration towards right aims and lofty living to their worshipers. Of the richest among the old mythologies, nothing now is left but the dream-like memory of a dead religion.

To look reverently into the face of Nature is to look into the face of Christ. We see His lineaments as through a veil, but He is there. By the mystery of His human birth and ours, we know that He has been, nay, that He *is*, in this vast, visible unfolding of invisible Being with us — Spirit revealed through form.

There is a conscious being somewhere behind every unconscious manifestation of life, or it could never have existed at all. We call it the working of a Spirit. What Spirit? Is there any other source of life than the One Spirit, — God? Is there

more than One God, — He who is known to us as Father, Son, and Spirit, — the One Life? And can we divide His nature, and say that by this part of Himself He gives this kind of life, and by that, another? Has He no human interest in the place He has prepared for His human family, even though it be only their temporary residence?

No; we shall never understand Nature, except in a manner entirely superficial, until we look into her spirit with spiritual eyes, like Christ's, — the only true human vision. For the habitation of man, as well as his form, is shaped by the Spirit, and planned by the Father and the Son, from the beginning. "By whom He made the worlds." "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made."

At the heart of Nature there are thoughts both human and divine. How else can we understand the perfect adaptation of every living creature to its circum-

stances, — as carefully fitted to them as man is to his? It was Love, as well as Power, that gave the wild beast the range of the wilderness, and the bird the freedom of the air. Christ spoke to men in the language of nature as His familiar speech, — by the blowing of the wind, by the flight or fall of the sparrow, and by the freshness of the flower at His feet. The waves steadied themselves like strong, friendly hands, to bear up His footsteps. The earth shuddered and quaked with horror at the cruelty of His crucifixion. With the Son of Man while on earth, Nature seemed to have a closer sympathy than man himself had. Who shall say that she does not know in some occult way, that her foundations also, like those of man's being, rest upon truth and love and righteousness? Who can tell how closely — how immortally, perhaps — our life is interknit with hers?

There is a deep significance in the tradition that at the hour of our Lord's last

agony a cry was heard by mariners across the waves, — "Great Pan is dead!" Was it not as if, the true Sovereign of the visible universe having risen from the power of death, Nature herself felt and announced that the hour of her own redemption was drawing nigh? We do her wrong, when we put her aside from our most sacred spiritual associations. She belongs in the heart's holiest places; and if we come to her reverently, she will build sanctuaries for us everywhere, to receive the unseen Redeemer who is both hers and ours. For

> The world we live in wholly is redeemed:
> Not man alone, but all that man holds dear;
> His orchards and his maize, — forget-me-nots
> And heart's-ease in his garden, — and the wild
> Aerial blossoms of the untamed wood
> That make its savagery so home-like, — all
> Have felt Christ's sweet love watering their roots.
> There are no Gentile oaks, no Pagan pines;
> The grass beneath our feet is Christian grass;
> The wayside weed is sacred unto Him.

One writes, — "There is nothing strange in our having affinity with the brutes and

the herbs, with the rocks and the waves, if we acknowledge one Spirit which works through the whole creation till it culminates in human morality and the cross of Jesus Christ." And another has said, — "The Bible reveals that Christ, the Eternal Word, is in Nature. The world is but the form, of which Christ is the Personality; the body, of which the soul is God; the outer appearance, of which the reality is God, and which mediates between God and us."

How deeply the devout heart of that most Christian poet, Cowper, felt this truth, and was comforted by it in many a gloomy hour of constitutional depression! He says

> "One Spirit — His
> Who wore the plaited thorns with bleeding brows,
> Rules universal nature. Not a flower
> But shows some touch in freckle, streak, or stain
> Of His unrivaled pencil. He inspires
> Their balmy odors, and imparts their hues,
> And bathes their eyes with nectar. Happy he
> Who walks with Him!"

If thoughts not our own come to us through natural objects around us, it is because an unseen Thinker has put them there for us to read. If our hearts are warmed, in deep mountain-solitudes, by a love which radiates out of the inmost silence and loneliness, it is because an unseen Lover is within that throbbing vastness, wrapping us about with it as with His garment-folds. The very air of some lofty wilderness-retreat, sought uncompanioned, is often to a burdened heart like the presence of a sympathetic friend, interpreting wordlessly the unuttered trouble, or lifting it away with a smile. They who have never wept lonely, happy tears in the presence of Nature, over the suddenly elucidated or gradually illumined mysteries of their own lives, have not guessed how near she can come to the human soul. She *can* speak, she *does* speak, with the very accents of Christ. From communion with the soul's Best Friend in the sanctity of her solitudes we often re-

turn to the closest earthly companionships slowly, and with reluctant steps.

It does not require the vast or the sublime in nature to stir us to inexpressible spiritual delight. A breeze from the hills at dawn, the lisp of a running brook, the rustle of dry grasses in autumn, a bird-song, a blossom, can startle us or soothe us with the conscious presence of a Being unseen; for the Sender of our truest inspirations always accompanies His messengers.

This is what George MacDonald says about flowers: —

"A flower comes from the same heart as man himself, and is sent to be his companion and minister. There is something divinely magical, because profoundly human, in them. In some, at least, the human is plain: we see a face of child-like peace and confidence that appeals to our best. Our feeling for many of them doubtless owes something to childish associations; but how did they get their hold

of our childhood? Why did they enter our souls at all? They are joyous, inarticulate children, come with vague messages from the Father of all. If I confess that what they say sometimes makes me weep, how can I call my feeling for them anything but love?"

Ah yes! We are but loving back Him who "first loved us," when we take the least blossom from His hand as from the hand of the friend who never offers us anything except with a thought, a benediction peculiarly fitted to the gift and to our need. From every wild flower of the field we may drink as from a sacramental chalice overflowing with His love; and He will share the cup, while we mingle with its perfume our sacrifice of gratitude and adoration: —

"For oh, but the world is fair, is fair!
And oh, but the world is sweet!
I will out in the gold of the blossoming mould,
And sit at the Master's feet.
And the love that my heart would speak
I will fold in the lily's rim,

That the lips of the blossom, more pure and meek,
May offer it up to Him ! "

That vision in Dante's "Paradiso," of glorified humanity as one vast unfolding Rose, — a blossom of which every petal is a soul, — entrances one who meditates upon it with the truth and the beauty of its suggestion; all conscious beings at last blending in one glorious, growing unity of splendor and fragrance, — a flower breathing back to God the Divine Love which He has breathed into its heart. Sometime, this Rose of Humanity shall indeed so send up its incense of praise to Him!

What we feel about Nature when we are most deeply in sympathy with her is that there is a living Spirit within all her forms; that there is behind her a creative Human Soul which is Divine, and in which we are united to her and to that Invisible Being Himself. It is not always through a study of her wonderful mechanisms and forces, though these reveal so much; it is oftener an inspiration that thrills at once

her being and ours, as if our heart-strings were attuned to her harp-strings, and one unseen Hand were awakening the same music from both, — nay, as if one unseen Heart were stirring within the heart of both. It is a Divine Humanity whose Presence we feel; for in proportion as things seem more living to us, they take on human qualities, and are alive to us just as we are alive; we belong to them and they to us. Dead matter does not belong to anything; but spirits belong to each other, and we and Nature throb together with the one uniting life of the unseen God. There is endless diversity around us; what we feel through it all is the One, — a Life like our own, only infinite. It is as if the whole creation were a song, and the Song and the Singer were the same; as if we had found our way into the heart of the universal harmony, and were a part of it ourselves. The song of the created is also the song of the redeemed; for creation and redemption — Creator and Redeemer — are one.

This is no mere rhapsody. To such raptures Nature is every day inviting her friends, through common ways, — through any fresh meadow-path or dewy woodland. The voice of the Lord God is still heard in her gardens and wildernesses, and it is echoed back from thousands of happy, speechless lives.

" Walk with thy fellow-creatures : note the hush
And whisperings among them. Not a spring
Or leaf but hath his morning hymn. Each bush
And oak doth know I AM. Canst *thou* not sing ? "

IX

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

He holds on firmly to some thread of life,
Which, conscious of, he may not enter yet; —
The spiritual life around this earthly life.

ROBERT BROWNING.

Let us remember that of most people we know, as of the moon, one side only, — the side which they present as they pass us in the throng of life. . . . It is only when it is too late that we learn that there may be on earth angels without wings. . . . Certain it is, that as our life is at present, we do not know men truly till they have joined the company of saints.

F. MAX MÜLLER.

Sweet hearts around us throb and beat;
  Sweet helping bands are stirred:
And palpitates the veil between
  With breathings almost heard.

The silence — awful, deep, and calm —
  They have no power to break;
For mortal words are not for them
  To utter or partake.

Sweet souls around us, watch us still!
  Press nearer to our side!
Into our thoughts, into our prayers,
  With gentle helpings glide!

Let death between us be as naught;
  A dried and vanished stream;
Your joy be the reality —
  Our suffering life the dream!

HARRIET BEECHER STOWE.

IX.

A Cloud of Witnesses.

IT is as certain as that we live at all, that we are living in a spirit-world. We are spirits, surrounded by spirits. We have our external relations, of material bodies to material things, but woe to us if we give ourselves up to them as real relations, and live in them as if they had no spiritual origin and intention! Through such errors we lose their true meaning, and the fine gold of life becomes dim and turns to dust as it slips through our fingers.

Things are realities only through the Divine Thought that is in them. When we recognize this truth, they are more than things to us; they are presences. That Divine Thought is the soul that may

be found by the soul that seeks it, in every object God has made.

"Nature is not fixed, but fluid. Spirit alters, moulds, makes it. The immobility or bruteness of nature is the absence of spirit. — Every spirit builds itself a house, and beyond its house a world, and beyond its world, a heaven."

We treat Nature as if she were dead, and as if we alone were alive. If we lived with her as with a presence overflowing with the Presence of God, as she is, she would make our souls rich with her wonderful secrets. More unkindly still, we often treat ourselves as if we were dead. And indeed, to live in our bodies as if we were without souls, is spiritual death: at the best estimate, it is the obliteration of the difference between the brute and the human being. Who are we? Human spirits sent forth from the Divine Spirit, to transmit His life and His love one to another, out into the remote unexplored abysses of being that we name Eternity.

Forms meeting forms impart to one another, through the inner, unseen approach of spirit to spirit, the glory of His Presence. This is what our human life was meant for; and without this it is a failure. Man, considered by himself alone, apart from the Unseen Being in whom he lives and moves, is only a more perfectly organized animal. "His health and greatness consist in his being the channel through which heaven flows to earth." — "Is a man boastful and knowing, and his own master? — we turn from him without hope: but let him be filled with awe and dread before the Vast and the Divine, which uses him, glad to be used, and our eye is riveted to the chain of events." [1]

People talk in these modern days about holding communication with spirits, as if it were a new thing, while almost everything we have learned on earth has come to us through the medium of other spirits. "Being dead, they yet speak," soul to

[1] R. W. Emerson.

soul, through books, through the memory of written words and of the living voice, through the indefinable influence of a pure and sympathetic personality, often most closely realized in absence, — yes, even in the absence that men call death. Poets and prophets and wise men of all the ages are often nearer to us than our next neighbor. They sit down with us in our solitude and think their thoughts over again for us, and the truths they impart are as seeds planted in the garden of our soul, to spring up and bear new fruit for other souls. In all sincere intercourse with our fellow-beings, we are constantly exchanging spiritual communications. Our words may be playful, while the thought beneath them is deep and earnest as eternity. The "idle words" are the thoughtless, heartless, insincere words, — and for these we must give account, as having misused the vehicle of speech or given it up to evil guidance.

But it is not our words only that speak.

We ourselves are the real word, the life-utterance which speech often falsifies. Every genuine person is a "living epistle" which love reads without need of interpretative words. There are faces that never deceive or mislead us: —

> "When you had once seen her forehead and mouth,
> You saw as distinctly her soul and her truth."

And such transparency of character does not indicate shallowness. It is the water of the deepest wells that is "clear as crystal." A spiritual nature can but be frank and honest, because its foundation-stones are laid in the truth, and it knows that nothing else holds.

Every unselfish deed that we do, nay, every large, loving, generous impulse that we cherish in our souls, is a spiritual message to somebody. For there are natures so delicately attuned that they can divine the secret of a noble and genuine character, they can feel the quality of another's life, without having it explained to them. In this way, doubtless, the angels become

acquainted with us; and in this way, perhaps, our friends who have gone to live among the angels still retain their hold upon us, and are helping us. Every being who has lived on the earth and has passed away from it, leaving seeds of love and wisdom sown in human lives, is a living being still, in the most real sense. Something of his personality, truth colored and shaped by his character — which is himself — yet lingers in every life he has entered and helped, and can never be expunged. That life and his life have a point of union which is to both an assurance of immortality. Somewhere they must find each other and work out together to larger issues the truth which was mutually theirs. So spiritual communication is forever kept up throughout the universe.

And what is love — human or divine — but the manifestation of spirit to spirit, — of the invisible to the visible? Often, it is true, through the voice, the glance, the

bodily presence, — yet so is it even the more real; for the outward is transfigured by the inward, and the expression is one with the reality. A true lover never questions whether love is or is not a revelation of the invisible.

"No; there is not one sacred hour of the heart's intercourse with others in which we are not looking to and living upon the Unseen. The eye that looks on us is but the material organ of an unseen spirit's love; the familiar voice that speaks to us draws its tones from an unsearchable heart whose life is hid with God. The very hand that is clasped in ours has a pressure of tenderness that belongs not to flesh and blood, and is an impress from the unseen soul."[1]

The loving life is the spiritual life. The old myth pictures Love as blind; but the lover is the only inspired seer. And, interchangeably, insight means love. If we beheld our fellow-beings as God sees them, — a spark of His nature always hid-

[1] J. H. Thom.

den somewhere within each of them, underneath their follies and their sins, — we could not help loving them, every one. And so of the lower natures around us, of animals, plants, and of all elementary life that has felt His breath and the touch of His finger, — if we were sensitive to the Presence within them, for His sake everything in His universe would be dear. We could not harbor cruelty, or contempt, or indifference, for to see as He sees is to love. To see the world, through and through, as a spiritual world, and to live in it as such, is to be already at the threshold of heaven. We are defrauding ourselves of the very best part of our present inheritance, while we live only in surfaces, — only in the things that are seen. Heaven is indeed but the finding and living in the best of our human inheritance.

We have been taught much about a mysterious Day of Judgment, far in the future ; but its awful light gleams upon us every day from human eyes that reproach

us with our unfaithfulness to our own immortal nature and to that of the less favored beings around us. They require it of us — and they have a right to require it — that we live among them as in a world of spirits rather than of bodies, — as heirs together and sharers of the Life Unseen.

Shall we never learn that the human race — of which each of us, however strong or rich, counts only one — is a spiritual family, and that whatever advantages or privileges any one receives are intrusted to that one not as his perquisites, but for the good of the whole? The higher is raised to his height that he may lift up the low; the richer is laden with riches that he may help the poor; and this divine arrangement applies alike to the kingdoms of nature and of grace. Power and riches have both external and invisible values, and it is the problem set before their possessor, as a faithful steward, to find out their spiritual worth, and to use them in the noblest way, —

"As ever in the great Task-Master's eye."

Not only from other eyes do the rays of judgment-light pierce our souls. We cannot gaze honestly into the face that gazes into ours from a mirror, without quailing before its reproof. A spirit looks through those windows down into the obscurities of our heart and life, and asks, "Hast thou been faithful to Me, — to this invisible Myself which is Thyself, — to the Presence of the Divine One in every faculty of thy human being? If thou hast truly loved thyself, thou hast loved thy neighbor also, as an indissoluble part of thyself, as one with thee in the unseen life and love of God. Canst thou look up into His face and say humbly, 'O God, I have fulfilled, I am fulfilling Thy ideal of me, and I shall not fear to meet that Ideal at Thine own tribunal; I have loved the Lord my God with all my heart, and my neighbor as myself'?"

One being only, one human being like

ourselves, can stand up in the assemblage of worlds and thus assert His own conscious loyalty to the Divinity within Him, —the first-born Son of God! Courage and hope flow down into our souls with the knowledge that He *is* "the first-born among many brethren," and that we, who are His, may conquer our foes through the same Spirit whereby He won the victory. He is always with us as our Judge, our only standard of character. Disloyalty to Him is disloyalty to ourselves.

"As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." We do not often enough remember that as we think of others, so are we to them. It is in us, as human beings, instinctively to recognize and to hate insincerity. Nobody is in the end deceived by expression that is merely outward and perfunctory. Our inner life is transparent; it cannot conceal itself; if it is a true life, it has no need or desire of concealment. To think the loving thoughts of each other that God thinks of us all; to

harbor no malicious, no ungenerous feeling towards others, and to leave Him to judge of their seeming unkindnesses to us, — this is not only our human duty, but our divine privilege. And a life of good-will towards men is also the only life of peace on earth.

It is impossible to estimate the influence of a nature gentle with heavenly graces and sympathies, — of a character strong with divine courage and holiness, upon other human beings associated therewith. The pressure of our atmosphere upon the earth, and its relations to physical life, but faintly suggest the power that enters into universal humanity through spiritual atmospheres. Many a strong nature is sustained in his happy strength by influences unacknowledged and unguessed, — by a silent, steady love too humble and too genuine to assert itself in words. Many a great man owes all that is best in him to some lowly, self-sacrificing domestic companionship, angelic in its faithfulness of homely service.

Could we but be aware of the spiritual rank of the immortal stranger who sits with us at our daily meal, — or who, wearing the disguise of a menial, makes life smooth for us with unrequited services, — could we but see these loyal, unattractive ones as they really are, — for we are always neglecting angels unawares, — should we not make their lives bloom with honor and gratitude, as they do ours with affectionate thoughtfulness? The little, unobtrusive rill of love that bedewed our path with constant freshness had its hidden sources in the Infinite. We accepted the refreshment, without seeing that the cup we drank from was the giver's own heart, overflowing out of the inmost heart of God. We depend most entirely, sometimes, upon those whom we comprehend the least. At last a day comes when the familiar presence disappears, leaving behind nothing but unavailing regrets and remorseful memories: —

> "O for the touch of a vanished hand,
> And the sound of a voice that is still!"

Nothing cuts us so keenly in the awful blow of separation by death as the remembrance of having misconceived the inmost life and character of one we have loved, or by whom we have been beloved. "O fools and blind!" we cry out to ourselves, when by the light that breaks out of that final mystery we see what our friend really was, — a being with whom we might have lived on earth in the only satisfying companionship, of soul with soul. To many a mourner, Death is the first clear, stern revealer of a loveliness unappreciated while the lost one was yet in sight. The greatest of poets has prophesied to us of this sorrow: —

"The idea of her life shall sweetly creep
Into his study of imagination,
And every lovely organ of her life
Shall come apparelled in more precious habit,
More moving-delicate and full of life
Into the eye and prospect of his soul
Than when she lived indeed."

It is no beautiful spectre returning to upbraid us; it is the real being, the faith-

ful soul looking into our eyes and piercing our heart with the pitying tenderness of its "might have been."

> " 'T is only when they spring to heaven that angels
> Reveal themselves to you : they sit all day
> Beside you, and lie down at night by you
> Who care not for their presence, muse or sleep, —
> And all at once they leave you, and you know them."

We might welcome some phases of modern spiritism, as an indication of the willingness of shut eyes to unclose themselves to invisible realities, were it not that these manifestations are so much oftener material than spiritual. Ghosts have always been supposed to haunt the world they once lived in, — the shadowy shells of earthly lives loath to be absorbed into the unseen, still drifting and floating near the shores of mortality; but it is not ghosts we want, it is the *souls* of our friends, the *beings* whom we have known — if we have known them truly at all — not so much *in* their earthly body as *through* it, as through a suggesting yet concealing veil.

Mortal eyes pry in vain into the secrets of immortality. Spirits are only to be beheld by spiritual vision. If we could or would open our soul's eyes, we should see spirits now surrounding us everywhere; and living with them this earthly life as a heavenly life, they would never vanish from our sight or slip away from our companionship. Neither life nor death could separate them from us, or us from them. The believer in Christ as the Resurrection and the Life is the only genuine spiritualist. Did He not say plainly to Martha at the grave of Lazarus, in reply to her cold theory of some far-off, final rising from the dead, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die"?

Death, like this external existence of which it is a result, is only an appearance. Our earth-clothes and our grave-clothes are woven of the same tissues. The spiritual man casts aside his cerements, and wears his outer earth-garment loosely, walking through all worlds clad in spirit-

ual raiment — in the "fine linen, clean and white" of holy character, — the righteousness of Christ.

But are they not near us, — our best-beloved invisible ones? Can they not make their presence known to us? Undoubtedly, though in ways of which we are not always conscious. Living and loving still, they cannot have ceased from doing, — from helping.

"Do we not know what their occupations must be? Most truly the occupations of heavenly creatures, because devoted to the succor and comforting of those who are walking and often missing their way upon earth. A light falls upon the pages of a book; — it seems as if some one were showing you the true sense of it. Why not he who wrote it? — he who perhaps understood his own words but imperfectly when he set them down, but who has learned the signification of them since. A room brings back the memory of faces that were once seen, of voices that were

once heard in it: — why may not tl faces be looking at us — those voices giving to us reproofs and consolatio If we thought so, we should care lit for mock messages from the departed; the real would be infinitely precious an awful."[1]

To believe in Christ is to disbelieve ir death. He did die, as we use the word regarding our mortal bodies, but He passed through that experience, literally "tasting death for every man," that we might know that this spiritual being which is *ourself*, cannot die; that we do but pass from visible into invisible life. What is our faith in Christ but that HE IS, the same Being that He was when on earth — a Being who is the very life of God to us, every hour pouring the tides of His love and His salvation through our souls? "I am He who liveth — who am alive from the dead forevermore,"— is His own Voice through the Vision. "Because I live, ye

[1] F. D. Maurice.

shall live also," He said to His friends, speaking out of that eternity which was His home even while He was visible to them in time.

And yet, when our friends pass from the Seen to the Unseen, we speak of them as "*gone.*" Why, if they really were near to us here, as spirits, their going is a coming ; they have not now a mortal body to hinder their spiritual approach.

It is heartless, the way we do often think of them after a little while, as if they had lost their identity, their own dear individual humanity, and were wholly forgetful of us, — strange saints hidden under their mysterious halos in a foreign heaven. Perhaps one reason for this is that we do not always know each other in our real identity here. We claim each other more by our earthly ties than through our spiritual relationship, and so we often live among those with whom nature or society has associated us, apparently acquainted, but really entire strangers. But every

human relation might be, doubtless was meant to be, an eternal relation. How close earth would be to heaven, if it were so!

If we would not lose our friends, we must live in a true recognition of their character, their personality, here where God has placed us side by side. A loving perception of all that is best in them — of their true, growing, developing, aspiring selves — would keep them so distinct in our hearts that the separating years would but deepen the consciousness of their living presence, and we could no more lose them in the wildernesses of eternity than we could lose ourselves or God. So loving those who have become invisible, our lives and theirs would still be blended in all holiest thoughts, hopes, prayers, and aspirations, and our own passing from earth would be but as the overtaking of companions whom we had fallen a little behind on our journey.

They are about us ever, in earth and

heaven, "a great cloud of witnesses" to the reality of our immortal life. That grand eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews is but the beginning of a noble catalogue of faithful ones innumerable, both unknown and well known. And leading them all is the name of Jesus Christ, "the faithful Witness, the first-born of the dead." The "Captain of our salvation" is also the "Author and Finisher of our faith."

X

"AS SEEING HIM"

Faith will never be lost in sight; for however high the heaven we attain, there will yet be a higher one for faith to apprehend and for the soul to reach after. The sea of mystery will only recede and lie on a remoter horizon.

E. H. Sears.

The moment a soul is inspired by the sight of truth, its power becomes incalculably great. It passes all laws and limits of material development. It acts on all time, all lands. No such phenomenon is seen in the physical universe as this subtle, all-penetrating, all-transforming force of a great conviction.

James Freeman Clarke.

It is becoming painfully evident to a non-Christian philosophy that the finite cannot explain the infinite. Hands are reaching out for the infinities. Indeed, men are surer of the infinite than of the finite. — The mind finds a universe on its hands, when it takes up an atom.

F. W. Gunsaulus.

O Bearer of the key
That shuts and opens with a sound so sweet
Its turning in the wards is melody, —
All things we move among are incomplete
And vain until we fashion them in Thee!

Dora Greenwell.

X.

"As Seeing Him."

THE AUTHOR of our faith! He with whom the idea of man's reunion to God originated, and through whom it has found entrance into human souls! And its Finisher! The story on our side is not ended yet; in the largest sense it never will be. It is unfolding, but it is forever gloriously unfinished; it moves onward towards unimaginable experiences and events, for it is the story of our progress, — our eternal progress towards union with the Infinite Life of God. In the Son of God the history is complete: the book of His human life of faith is perfect; it is open before us; and it is also *our* faith, — ours to share and to emulate forever.

Faith is better than sight for beings like us, ignorant and undeveloped. There is greater joy in trusting our Father and our Friend, because He is Himself, than there would be in reiterated explanations of what we cannot understand. But faith is not blind; it is "as seeing;" it is the gradual opening of the Spirit's eyes; it is a growing insight, which lets us into the ways of God; a power which strengthens and enlarges with use.

If Jesus is the Finisher of our faith, He will always be near us, within us, leading us on through all worlds and all ages, that we may see with His eyes, and feel His wisdom and love unfolding for us and through us the endless mysteries of Being. We, created and dependent beings, must always live by faith; and faith must always live by Him. Everywhere, and eternally, to human souls, Christ must be the human interpreter of God.

We cannot, in any coming state, find a new starting-point for our soul's journey.

Wherever we are, the Beginning and the End are the same. God, the *I Am*, — Father, Son, and Spirit, — is both centre and circumference. The Son is the revelation to us of the Father-Spirit, the Uniter of all souls and substances in Him. That we do not look for Him and find Him in Nature as well as in ourselves, is our fault and our loss. Plainly the great Apostle understood and spoke: —

"His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; — being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power. . . . Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature: — and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist."

"In Him all things consist;" that is, "*hold together*" is the marginal reading in the Revised Version of the New Testament. Nature is a mass of disjointed fragments, except as bound up into the

life of redeemed humanity. Christ is the first-born, "before all things," planning, holding and saving, even as He saves man, all that belongs to man and is dear to him. These wonderful senses of ours, through which the whole external universe is opened to our consciousness, — are they extinguished with the dissolution of this mortal frame? They cease from visible action, but do they therefore cease to be? "The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing," because the eye feels within itself the prophecy of a truer seeing, the ear of a finer hearing, in some more spiritual condition than this. The physical is not necessarily corrupt and evil. If the body has shared the life of the spirit, if through all its senses nothing but the thoughts and feelings of a holy soul have been breathed, it is but natural to believe that the soul will inspire the sense with its own vitality, and so make it more nearly a perfect vehicle for its deathless ideas and sympathies. Milton's

thought was, that a pure inward life might transform

> "The outward shape,
> The unpolluted temple of the mind,
> And turn it by degrees to the soul's essence,
> Till all be made immortal."

Surely everything that has in it any element of permanence must live on into higher phases of existence, — like itself, yet better than itself. The analogies of nature teach this. Leaf and calyx aspire to shape the flower. The animal reaches up towards man; man would unfold himself into the angel.

"We are complete in Him," — moving eternally from lower towards higher completions, towards His infinite perfection.

"The atonement is the reconciliation of all that is human to the divine. Man is not pure spirit alone. The human personality is not redeemed by forces which simply re-create a new life in the soul. Such a life within as gives a pledge to the body of our humiliation, every sound theology

must offer as the complete salvation in Christ. . . .

"Jesus transfigured is the transfiguration of the whole universe. . . . The resurrection of the Christ of God is that all-inclusive manifestation of the *Logos*, which in the beginning moved in chaos toward a cosmos, and which at last, through that manifestation, abolishes the primeval discord of Life and death. . . . The resurrection completed the transfiguration. . . . Our resurrection body will come from the complete transfiguration of our whole life." [1]

Christ arose from the dead, lived many days upon earth, and disappeared from it, in a human form. He was careful from the first moment of His reappearing to His friends, that they should know He was not an apparition, — or, as they fancied at first, a spirit only. It was the man Christ Jesus, who, in a shape like their own walked among them, delivered from the

[1] F. W. Gunsaulus.

grave, and who vanished from their eyes into invisible light. Our perfect humanity He took with Him into the heavens; and everything in our human nature worth saving, is saved in Him. "The adoption, the redemption of the body," was the great idea never lost sight of by Saint Paul, — the apostle who had the deepest spiritual insight into "the power of His resurrection." The whole of our human nature is to be changed into the likeness of our Lord's; that alone is salvation. If our spiritual sight were clear, we should see shining through every human form, a form "like the Son of God." These bodies also are to be made sound and whole in all their faculties, with His holiness; they also are to be "preserved blameless" unto His coming. Only what is corruptible can perish. Our nature, if purified in every part of it, "as He is pure," must be raised incorruptible, with Him. Every hour of our life, we are hindering or helping the growth of our

resurrection-form, — the spiritual body. Life in its very nature forever struggles through all resistance to shape itself into its highest possible ideal.

The pure in heart, with vision cleansed from deathly defects, see God manifest in the least as in the greatest of His creations. Everything in nature that has received the shaping spirit of His life must share with man in some deep sense the secret of immortality. The daily marvel of sunrise and the ever-renewed miracle of springtime are living manifestations of the Divine Thought, — witnesses of a Divine Thinker, an Eternal Creator ; there is in them nothing of death, as spiritually beheld. Their glory, their reality, has entered into us and filled us with foregleams of eternal sunrise and an everlasting Spring. They are part of our heaven, and they cannot be shut out of it.

It is often said, and truly, that fully to feel the power of a great poem we must be poets ourselves. It is a proof that we are

poets if we can respond to the noble song. The poetry is in our hearts, as a conscious vibration to the music of the poet's mind. Even so it is with this great poem of creation. In feeling the beauty of it, in living out the glory of it from the deepest sympathy of our souls, we are makers and continuers of it with God. We hush our thoughts to listen to the solemn undertones of eternity in the chant of the vesper sparrow, and in the sigh of the west wind through the boughs of the solitary pine. We look tenderly into the wild-flower's heart, and understand just why that half-human rose-tint has touched its petals,—feeling almost as if we had laid the lovely color there ourselves. He who made us and this wonderful world, made us to sympathize with Him in every beautiful thing He does.

The poem of Life is one vast harmony and unity, — it is the poem of Nature and of Man; and God is at the soul of it, the Author and Inspirer of the whole. We

all take our little parts, as characters in it, gathered around the glorious central Figure who gives meaning to the movements of each, Himself a revelation of the Infinite Heart out of which the song was born, — Himself both human and Divine. For us, it is a story without an end, a song forever new.

The devout astronomer could read the stars, saying with awe, "O God, I think Thy thoughts after Thee!" Each of us, looking up into the face of the Only Beautiful and Perfect One, may humbly breathe toward Him the grateful thought, — "O God in Christ, I live Thy life after Thee!"

The Heart of God and the heart of the universe are one. It is but saying that Love is the Source, and Centre, and Sustainer of all; and that its highest possible manifestation to us is in a human being who is perfectly one with the Divine. Love is Divine, but it can only be translated to us through a human nature, —

through that nature which is both Christ's and ours. The translation and the Translator are one. Love has been made plain to us in a Life; through that Life we may learn perfectly the meaning of our own. The grandeur into which the humblest human personality may unfold has been portrayed to us with spiritual, with god-like power, in His own Person.

All that ever has been said of "the dignity of human nature" falls short of the ideal hidden within every one of us as the child of God, — the prophetic vision of what we shall be when our whole nature shall have absorbed into itself, to radiate thence forever, the transforming glory of the character of Christ.

"Jesus took these splendid human capacities of ours and carried them beyond the stars into the heavenly worlds of character and service, and when men listened, — as they had to listen, — hark! in those visionary worlds the same old human faculties had put out a new strength and

worked with a pulse of power and a throb of music which made heaven and earth stand still and listen. Yet it was our human patience with which He was patient, and our human bravery with which He was brave, and our human intelligence with which He knew, and our human purity with which He was pure. Only they proved themselves divine when they attained their full humanity."[1]

It is the holy man who is the whole man; Holiness is manhood, is humanity, whose perfect type is Christ. "*When we shall see Him as He is, we shall be like Him.*" His character and His love will so inspire us that every lower ideal will vanish from our thoughts. When we have had one true glimpse of Him, there will be no other life for us to live, but His. Our hearts must often sink before the glory of this Ideal, — whose Presence is always with us as our Judge, — contrasted with whose dazzling purity the whitest

[1] Phillips Brooks.

soul must darken and look soiled, — beside whose love the warmest and tenderest heart must seem cold; but it is just this white, holy warmth of His being that attracts us towards Himself, and will pervade our whole nature with its irresistible contagion of heavenly health. In the hope of drawing nearer to Him, we can but strive constantly to purify ourselves, "even as He is pure."

Christ is the human heart of God, throbbing down through the life of human beings, — through soul and mind and body, through faculties, affections, feelings, senses, — through all phases of organized and developing existence, — through birth and growth and blossoming and ripening, — through beauty and melody and color and strength and grandeur, through all that man and nature are or shall be; the heart of God, waiting to receive the grateful life-flood of joy back into itself from every thought, through the remotest tissues of every form, — to circulate again with a

fuller joy throughout creation, by every artery and vein. The heart is at the centre, and unites the whole. Nature and man find their unity with each other and with God, in Him. The Spirit that breathes through all souls and forms and worlds is the Presence, the Breath of the Father and the Son.

Jesus Christ, the eternal Mediator between earth and heaven, the Restorer of the lost harmony between man, his God, and the universe, the Sustainer of spiritual life in man, and his Inspirer towards the immortal unfolding of all his faculties, is the grandest conception that ever entered the human soul. No man can grasp it perfectly, yet the weakest mind can see its beauty, and live in its truth. Beyond all our theologies and philosophies and sciences HE dawns, —

> "Another morn
> Risen on mid-noon."

We are living in an era of intellectual illumination, — of discoveries that take

us to the farthest outer verge of known natural law, and beckon us onward to regions unknown. But the intellect by itself gives forth only a cold splendor; and sometimes it seems to us that in this day of ours, as knowledge increases,

> "An age of light,
> Light without love, glares on the aching sight."

We do not want to stand staring at the sun, but to live in its warmth, — to grow, and to blossom, and so transmit its radiance. We shall never study Nature aright, except through living, penetrative sympathies like Christ's, — except through the consciousness of being related to the entire universe through our relation to God. Our mortal method is to pry into the imprisoning darkness around us without the one only elucidating key held in the hand of the Christ of God, — the key of spiritual Light. We call our method "investigation," but we find it often only a deeper, more inextricable bewilderment. We begin with things, and demand from their dumb

lips an explanation of themselves and of God. We must begin with God, and let Him be our guide through His own mysteries, the illumination of His own work. The intellect is often too proud to follow Him: it feels strong enough to walk alone, wise enough to see its own way; therefore the learned are sometimes the most ignorant. Truths hidden from the wise and prudent are revealed unto babes.

Faith is the soul of man communing with and resting upon the Infinite Soul, God. It is the whole invisible personal nature lying open to the Invisible Being who is its source, conversing with Him, and receiving the inspiration of His life. Reason sees much that is true: but it sees no truth in its fullness without the illumination of faith: for faith is as the eye of God within the eye of the soul, enabling man to receive all of His light human vision is strong enough to bear. Faith means the same thing to the loftiest reason and to the simplicity of the little child.

The astonishing developments of modern science show us to what perfection the human intellect can be brought, as an instrument for looking into nature, and putting her occult forces into practical use. But the intellect by itself never discovered a truth, any more than a telescope discovers a new star. It is the eye behind the telescope, the soul behind the intellect, that sees what was before unseen. The truth was always there, — and infinitely greater truth remains to be unfolded to man, when he shall have humbled his intellect to its true office. When he loves the truth with his heart and soul as well as his mind, he will discover hidden secrets of Nature of whose resplendence he has not yet dreamed. Regenerated Science has her glorious part yet to take in the unveiling of the new heavens and the new earth.

What it means to be living in a spiritual world, — as indeed we are living, — who has yet begun to guess? Yet this is what

the life and death and resurrection and ascension of Christ have revealed to us; they have made heaven far more real to us than earth, — immortality far surer than mortality. When one dies, men say of him that he has gone into the presence of his God. Can any of us be more really in the presence of God in any part of His universe than we are in this world, at this very moment? We think of Him as afar off, as everywhere else but here; but unless He is here, beside us, among us, within us, there is for us no God at all.

Spirits we are, children of the Eternal Spirit, who is with us always as Redeemer and Comforter and Guide. This is a spirit-world, and if we would but live in it as such, we should at last begin to see how inexpressibly beautiful it is.

We do not really know what it is to be human — what it is to be true children of this earth, even — until our souls are enfolded in the love of Christ, until we are living "as seeing Him."

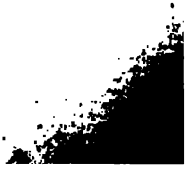
This is the meaning and purpose of every human life, — to be, like Christ, a spiritual presence for good upon the earth. And the spiritual implies the immortal: this presence is the presence of a guest from the eternities, who must forever be traveling onward upon his errands of love. A spirit is an effluence of life and light from the central Sun of Being, — an eternal going-forth from the bosom of the Infinite spirit, — a deathless messenger of the inexhaustible Love.

The Son of God was a living fountain of love from His Father's heart; and as the Son of Man, He has shown to every child of humanity that he also is one of the sons of God, and may share His own high privilege of service and sacrifice. From His earthly humiliation shines forth a burning splendor that reveals the utter meanness of our selfish lives, and scorches and shrivels them to nothingness. Think what our world would be to-day, without her Christ!

The solitude of the soul cries out for the Invisible Friend: its happiest relationships ask to be strengthened and consecrated by His Presence. Things are unmeaning, and thought an endless perplexity, without Him. Joy is emptiness, and sorrow becomes despair, apart from Him. This globe of earth, except He be the soul of it, is a mere plaything for creative fingers, — an idle playground for man.

But He is! He lives! And in Him our souls' wounds are healed; we are restored to immortal health. He lives! He is arisen! His birth-song and His resurrection-hymn blend in one. The star that the wise men saw on the horizon is in the zenith, and the wisest men of this later time are guided by its rays to His cradle in their own hearts, in the heart of all the wisdom of all the ages. In us He is born, in us He is arisen, in us He lives!

He is — and His name is Immanuel, God with us forever! Invisibly we live

with Him and with His friends and ours who are here still, or who have passed out of our sight; for earth and heaven are but one world, in Him. Life and Death look into each other's face, and thence into His, and smile with a mutual understanding. And at last we begin to comprehend our life, ourselves, and one another, while we draw, heart unto heart, closer around Him from whom neither life nor death shall separate us, —

"*Whom, having not seen, we love.*"